

EIGHT LECTURES

BY

L. K. WASHBURN.

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE INGERSOLL SECULAR SOCIETY,
BOSTON, MASS.

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1998

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Emmett F. Fields

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FOOLISHNESS OF PRAYER.

A L E C T U R E

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

INGERSOLL SECULAR SOCIETY,

In Investigator Hall, Boston, December 6, 1884,

BY L. K. WASHBURN.

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THE FOOLISHNESS OF PRAYER.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN :—

I know of no sufficient reason why a man should not acknowledge his religious convictions. The first duty we owe to ourselves and to the world is to be honest. But I know of no good reason why a person should profess a faith which his life contradicts. There is no necessity for a person to be a hypocrite. If a certain class of people in a community openly profess and avow certain principles, and publicly preach them, and also assume that they are better men and women for believing such principles, then if they openly violate their professions, are they not justly liable to criticism, if not censure? It is upon the ground of treachery to their principles that Christians are open to condemnation. When a man assumes the character of an honest man, we do not like to find him as slippery as a piece of wet soap; and when he professes to love his brother man, we do not want to see him sell seven feet and a half of wood for a cord. We do not judge a man by what he professes; we judge his professions by what he does.

No pious performance has imposed more upon the world than praying. The praying man has been the *good* man, the religious man, the saintly

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man. If you have ever seen one of these praying men, you have seen them all, for they are as similar as the faces on a sheet of postage stamps.—They all have the same don't-you-see-how-pious-I-am look. But a prayer to-day does not pass for its face value, and the praying man is not trusted on account of his doctrines. There is a feeling in the business world—which amounts to conviction—that when a man possesses an offensive air of sanctity, it is best to keep an eye on him. When we hear of a defaulter to-day, we involuntarily ask, what church does he belong to? Does any one know why it is that so many of the embezzlers of the present time are prominent Christians in their respective communities? From the church to the jail is getting to be a well-trodden road in this age.

It has been justly observed, that an honest disbelief of the Christian dogmas has not hurt the cause of religion so much as a dishonest belief. The Pecksniffs, and not the Voltaires and Paines and Ingersolls, are the enemies of righteousness. Those men that are so “utterly, utterly” pious, are generally hypocrites. The experience of mankind bids us beware of the praying man.

I am willing to believe the statement that sickness can be cured by prayer, when I see it done; but I am not willing that the simple and credulous should be imposed upon, and be the victims of a cruel superstition which designing men have fostered for their own selfish purposes.

This is the attitude of unbelievers towards prayer. We doubt its efficacy, and ask that it be demonstrated before we have faith in it. This is the only safeguard against imposition, and if prayer shrinks from a trial of its power, it confesses itself a fraud and a cheat. Men have the right to demand that they who teach that blessings

and benefits may be had by praying for them, shall show that they are telling the truth. It is a legitimate request that the pulpit exhibit the fruits of its prayers, or else stop its praying, for prayer is manifest hypocrisy unless it can get what it asks for. It is a foolish waste of time and breath to pray for things, if they cannot be had in this way.

The sudden fear that seized the church throughout Christendom when Prof. Tyndall offered his prayer-guage to test the virtue of petitions to God for temporal gifts, proves that faith in prayer is only pretence. Were there any real ground for believing that prayers are answered, how ready would be the church to stand trial! Not a Christian minister in the land but would lift up his voice to confound unbelief, did he know that he could get what he prayed for; but not one dares make the attempt. It is time that the superstition about prayer was met face to face, and compelled to prove its claim, or confess its hypocrisy. Let a person who professes to believe that God stands ready to give to man whatsoever he shall ask for, come forward and pray before a public audience for some gift, and have the prayer answered within sight of all present. In this way only will the world be convinced that persons making such professions mean what they say.

I do not believe that any words addressed to the name of God have power over a single square inch of Nature, or that cause and effect in the material world can be directed by the pious wishes of mortals. In what part of the universe is to be found this Being, who, we are told, watches over not only man's fall, but even the sparrow's fall? I ask this question in all seriousness. Does any man or woman in this city candidly believe that there is an intelligent, watchful, loving power apart from humanity, that knows our weaknesses,

watches over our lives, and has power to save them from temptation, from danger, from death?

Come out with me, and let us interrogate the scene around us. Ask the soil if it knows that a man is walking over it. Does the ground quiver with pain when we strike it with our foot? Does the rock moan when we break it asunder? Put your mouth to the earth and call the name of God, and see if you receive any response. Look into the heavens, and see if there be aught above you that can be named God. Call to the stars, and note if they show any sign that they hear you. Question the sun, the moon, the planets, if they know where this Divine Being is. What part of earth or heaven has hand, eye, ear, or sense of feeling? From whence comes the answer to human prayer, when man prays for help?

If we fall into the sea and pray God to rescue us from drowning, will he do it? Do not dodge this question, but answer yes! or no! If we by mistake swallow a fatal dose of poison and pray God to save our life, will he answer our prayer? Will you, who profess to believe that there is a God who will answer the prayers of men, try it and see? If we are in a burning building and there is no escape from the fire, will God save us from perishing in the flames if we pray to him for help? Does any one believe so? There is no necessity for our Christian manufacturers to provide fire-escapes for their buildings, if God will answer prayer; no use for physicians, no reason why people need to drown, if prayer will save them. Do you know of one single human being who has been taken from the water or from the flames by the hand of God?

Were you to put your faith in prayer, as the only power to preserve your life, your friends would very soon put you into the ground. Pray-

ing is the greatest folly of the nineteenth century. It is the offspring of superstition and ignorance. Praying for benefits is about as rational as a child crying for the moon. There is not a bone in the body of prayer, not an eye in its head, not a finger in its hand, and not a particle of power in its expression. It is as empty as a soap-bubble. It goes from the mouth of man to the ear of man. It is sent to heaven, but it falls on the earth.

Let us look around us and see if we can discover anything that prayer has accomplished. Has it opened a street in a city or town on the globe? Has it put a bridge across a river, or laid a track over the mountains? Has it built a ship or sailed it over the seas? Is it to be trusted as a pilot on the water; as a guide on the land? Where are the tracks of its feet, the marks of its hands, the monuments of its labor? What has man got by prayer? Did he get his house, or his furniture? Does he get his groceries or provisions, his wood and coal, by praying for them? Did man ever get a thing by prayer that costs money? If so, then have we found the poor man's currency. But I would not advise any one to depend upon praying for a business capital.

Will prayer make the deformed man straight, the black man white, or the ignorant man wise? Will it make the dishonest man honest? If it will, then ministers do well in saying, "Let us pray." But I believe that not a word has ever come out of the heavens above, and not a thing out of the earth beneath, in answer to prayer. Of course, my unbelief is met by the belief of others, that prayers are answered, but I will want to see the answers. I *know* that people will *believe* anything. When you can find men and women who believe that St. John wrote his life of Jesus with a feather from the wing of an angel, the belief

that a prayer to God for a barrel of flour was answered, fades into utter insignificance in comparison.

There never was a lie yet told that some one did not believe it. If we are to endorse one who believes that Balaam's beast was gifted with the power of human speech, why are we not to endorse another who says that he has heard a steam-engine talk in the English language? We may as well swallow one Jonah as another. There are millions of people in *our* FREE *land* who profess to believe that the Bible was written under Divine inspiration, but common sense sees in it only an ancient Morey letter. We cannot accept everybody's faith as reasonable, and I should not want to swap my belief for Cotton Mather's, even with the promise of heaven to boot.

The creeds of other people are not worth as much to us as to them. They lose their value if circulated outside of their native place. They are like Mexican dollars in this country, that pass for only eighty-five cents. A very large discount must be made on faith in prayers.

How have men obtained knowledge? By patient research and study, or by prayer? Did Humboldt have his splendid contributions to scientific knowledge delivered to him in answer to prayer, or were they the result of labor? Did Darwin find out the "Origin of Species" by praying, or by observation and reflection? Did Spencer discover the law of evolution by repeating a *pater noster*?

A man might pray for knowledge from sunrise until sunset every day in the year, and every year of his life, and if he took no other means to acquire it, he would die a dunce. Knowledge does not come for the asking. One person is taught to work, to depend upon labor for whatever he gets

in life, to use human means to benefit his race. Another is taught to pray, to depend upon prayer for whatever he gets in life, to use petitions to God to help humankind. The first person becomes a useful member of society; by his labor he gains independence, and in due time makes for himself a home, takes a wife, and rears a family of bright, healthy children, that gladden his heart and enrich society. He lends a helping hand to his less fortunate brother, gives words of cheer or counsel to those in distress, assistance to those in poverty, and sets an example of industry and virtue to the world.

The other becomes a useless member of society; he is supported by the labor of others, and thus robs the hard-working men and women of the right to blessings which they have earned. He lives alone and contributes no benefit to society. He sets an example of idleness and sloth to the world, and of so little account is his life that it might be said of him when he dies, "Earth is no poorer and heaven no richer for his departure." Work would make a garden of the earth, when prayer would make a cemetery.

Nine-tenths of all the foolishness of human faith roots in the belief that the Bible was written by God, and that it is to be believed as we believe the truth. Drive out of the mind the faith that this book is the word of God, and civilization would leap forward a thousand years. This faith has made men and women nearly everything that is bad, and scarcely anything that is good. It has instigated man to commit almost every crime. The belief that the Bible is holy, has caused the death of more human beings than there are words in the book.

The faith in praying is a Bible product. On its promise are prayers made. But men to-day are

beginning to ask with Job, "What profit should we have if we pray unto the Almighty?" What good does it do? is the common-sense objection to prayer. We cannot get a breakfast or a supper by praying for it. We cannot make the elm bear apples, or the bushes yield bread by prayer. We cannot protect our homes from misfortune, nor drive away suffering and want, by praying.

When we express a doubt in regard to the virtue of prayer, and ask to see the person who has had his prayers answered, some man or woman wishes to know "if we do not believe what the Bible says?" We answer, "*We do not!* Nor do we believe there is a human being on the globe who does believe what it says!"

We read in the twenty-first chapter of Matthew, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Do you tell me that the man or woman lives who believes such a statement as that? If so, and that verse holds the truth in the clasp of its words, then every soul that can sound its wish in the ear of heaven is master of the universe, and God himself (if there be a God) but the servant of its desires! That verse, if true, makes man a God, and gives him power to change earth to heaven in the twinkling of a star.

But what a lie it is! Were that declaration true, there should not be a pang on earth to-night. Not a cry of want should be heard. Not a tear of grief or shame should fall. The feast of plenty should load the board of famine; and misery and despair, these gaunt and grim spectres of human sins and crimes, should be changed to joy and blessedness. But it is useless to paint the canvas of human life with Bible colors. They will not wash. If any man thinks that he has an Aladdin's lamp in this verse of the twenty-first chapter of Matthew, let him put his faith to a trial.

Remembering the promise that "all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, ye shall receive," let him trust to praying for something to eat and drink, and let him undertake to go without food until God sets the table for his appetite, and rings the bell for his supper. Before he got a mouthful, his period of fasting would throw that of Dr. Tanner into the shade.

To trust to God to feed us, is a sure road to starvation. Christians who profess to believe in the Bible as God's word, do not seem to have much faith in the notion that there is a divine restaurant to which prayer is the key, but follow Infidels and unbelievers, and go to eating-houses where men and women do the cooking, knowing that a dollar will purchase a better dinner than a prayer.

How much faith have men and women in prayers to clothe them? We have not heard of any silk or velvet, woven by the power of prayer, being on exhibition at our industrial fairs, nor have we seen any clergymen dressed in broad-cloth that came from the looms of heaven. It is evident that Christian men and women prefer to have tailors and dressmakers, rather than trust to a Bible promise that God will clothe them.

Prayer, when asked to do a thing for humanity that must be done to keep life in the body, is obliged to be excused. We read in the Bible, "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him." The language here used is sufficiently clear to admit of no doubt as to its meaning; but does any intelligent person believe that prayer will arrest the ravages of disease?—that a sick man can be cured by a number of

words spoken over his body ? It seems to me that we are forced to question the honesty of men or to doubt their intelligence, when they profess to believe that disease can be charmed away by praying over it.

I have never heard of a college in this country, however Orthodox it may be, that has bestowed the degree of M. D. upon prayer, or showed by any act that it believed that praying possessed the power of healing. Does the person who pretends to believe that the Bible is God's word of truth, send for the elders of the church when a member of his family is attacked with pneumonia or typhoid fever, as he is there enjoined to do ? The question needs no answer. The passage which we have quoted stands for a faith that has passed away.

It is plain that Christians have more faith in a skillful physician than in the elders of their church in time of sickness, notwithstanding the Divine injunction to call in the latter, and the assurance that their prayers will prove effectual in the treatment of diseases. We have no particular desire to see the Christian ranks decimated, and we wish to be acquitted of any malicious thought or feeling, when we say we candidly think that if Christians were required to stand manfully to their faith, and in time of sickness risk their safety to the virtue of prayer, that no surer method could be adopted for getting rid of the entire lot. It would be inhuman to hold Christians to their professions, and we would be the very last to insist that they should be doctored with prayers. We only wish to point out the utter disregard for their professions manifested by Christians ; and let me tell them that the world is beginning to see, not only their inconsistency, but the practical dishonesty which is involved in their pious pretensions.

While I am not desirous of having the Christian men and women of the United States suffer the folly of their faith, I am quite willing that they should be made to demonstrate their foolishness in believing that prayers are answered. If they are honest in their faith they will renounce it, if, after an impartial trial, they find that they are deceiving themselves by their faith.

Suppose we have a company of respectable church members, who pretend to believe the promise of God, that "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, ye shall receive," seat themselves around an empty table, and repeat in concert these words:

Now we sit us down to eat,
We pray the Lord to give us meat;
If we should pray for food in vain,
We ne'er will trust in prayer again,—

would they be honest enough to abide the result of their experiment, or would they keep on making their pious professions when they know that praying has no more effect upon the power that rules the world than has whistling? They know, every one of them, that they would not be willing to submit to the test here proposed.

The excuse for the foolish faith in prayer of most people is, that the Bible teaches this faith, and therefore it must be true. We are told that the Bible says, "Ask and ye shall receive." We say, "Ask, and see if ye shall receive." The only answer yet made to a prayer to God was silence.

Of the words in the Bible upon which men and women rest their belief in prayer, we can only say, it was base to speak such words, baser still to write and print them; but the blackest guilt of all is to teach them as God's promise to men. The history of faith in these words for the last eighteen hundred years is a history of broken promises.

Notwithstanding the fact that we are living in

an age of so-called reason and science, the superstitious faith in prayer still deforms religion, and men pray to Gods, to ghosts, to saints, and to idols; but what a silly, foolish performance it is when looked at seriously! Think of a minister's praying God to kill grasshoppers, as was done in the West a few years ago! Imagine God trying to kill all the grasshoppers in the States of Missouri, Iowa, and Minnesota! A year or two later these same ministers, or others like them, tried to induce the Deity to undertake a crusade of one against the Colorado beetle! But we never read that the Deity enlisted in the undertaking. He probably had previous engagements. But imagine God on the path of a potato-bug! If an Infidel lecturer were to pray God to abolish mosquitoes, every Christian preacher in the land would declare that he was trying to ridicule the power of God. But if it is a pious task to set God on to grasshoppers and potato-bugs, why is it impious to ask him to put an end to mosquitoes?

Every time we have a drouth the pulpit prays for rain, and when we have a flood it prays for dry weather, and we presume that men who have prayed for rain every day for three weeks actually believe their prayers did the business, when at the end of that time a shower drenched the earth. Oh! religion, how many foolish things are done in thy name! A good many years ago we heard a minister pray, and in the course of his remarks to the Almighty, he took the liberty to suggest that a larger measure of wisdom would not be hurtful to the congregation. We agreed with him, but Christian ministers have been asking God to give their people wisdom for a long while, and we have never seen any sign that he has heard their prayers.

There is nothing more calculated to profane all that is sacred to the soul, and cheapen the feelings

and emotions which we hold dear, than the Christian notion that the secret wish of the heart, the hidden desire of the soul, is to be dragged before an audience for the entertainment of the curious and vulgar. There are no words great enough or pure enough for the heart's desire. We all have longings for help which earth cannot give, for light which the sun cannot shed, for love which the living cannot feel, but to voice these longings would soil them.

You ask me, would you not like to have things different in the world? There are hundreds of things which good men and pure women would rejoice to see in human life. There are reforms and improvements that would elevate society which all right-minded persons wish made, but such things will not come for the asking. We wish to see the ignorant enlightened, the foolish made wise, the down-trodden lifted up, the fallen restored to honor, the wrong-doer converted to right-doing, the bad made good, and the good better; but we know that no amount of wishing will bring these blessings. Praying will not reform the world, or there would not be a vice or wrong in it twenty-four hours. Mere desire for the good produces no good result. A great many seem to think that if they lie down with a good resolution they will get up covered with the glory of heroic action. If prayers were the only weapons wielded against the wrongs of society, not one would be corrected. If prayer were the only influence used to keep our homes pure and sweet for human life, not one of them would be fit for man or woman to live in. If prayer were the only power employed to reform mankind, not a single stain of vice would be washed out.

One of the silliest things that fathers and mothers do is to teach their children to pray. Bring

up the young to tell the truth, to be honest in word and deed; to be kind to their fellows; to be fearless and brave for the right; to know and obey the laws of body and mind, and earth will be covered with noble men and women. It is thought by some a beautiful sight to see a little, innocent child kneeling with clasped hands in the attitude of prayer; but it is a sad sight to those who know that a human mind is being enslaved to a superstition; that a human heart is being filled with fear; that a human soul is being made the victim of deception.

No matter who makes a prayer; no matter where it is made, or when, or how, it is foolish. Children should never be taught to pray. Men and women should know better than to do so. The mind that is busy with thoughts and plans for the world's improvement, is the abode of the best angels that ever blessed man with their ministrations, and no prayer is needed to bring these guests to our earthly homes, but a true love of truth, a manly love of man, and a right love of righteousness.

It is useless to disguise the fact, or deny the truth. There is a lot of hypocrisy in the piety of the church. Men are not always what they profess to be. There are pious frauds in every community; men who are saints on their knees, but knaves on their feet. Behind a pious face they hide a villain heart. They will believe any doctrine that has a dollar in it. These frauds are always men of prayer. They are ready to pray anywhere where they can be heard, and have an opportunity to advertise their piety. These men use prayer as a sort of theological weapon, a kind of religious pocket-pistol. It is fired off at Infidels, but it contains only a blank cartridge.

Religion is not what drops from the lips, but

what grows around the life. It is not shown by going to church, but by character and conduct; not in prayers, but in deeds.

" I do not like to hear him pray
On bended knee about an hour,
For grace to spend aright the day
Who knows his neighbor has no flour;
I'd rather see him go to mill,
And buy his luckless brother bread,
And see his children eat their fill,
And laugh beneath their humble shed.

" I do not like to hear him pray
'Le blessings on the widow be,'
Who never seeks her home to say
' If want o'ertakes you come to me.'
I hate the prayer so long and loud
That's offered for the orphan's weal,
By him who sees him crushed by wrong,
And only with his lips doth feel.

" I do not like to hear her pray,
With jewelled ear and silken dress,
Whose washer-woman toils all day,
And then is asked to work for less.
Such pious shavers I despise!
With folded hands and grace demure,
They lift to heaven their pious eyes,
Then steal the earnings of the poor."

Christians have had their own way in religious matters so long that they have come to look upon all ideas that are antagonistic to their petrified dogmas as deserving only condemnation, and upon all persons who refuse to wear a Christian collar and chain, and be led around the world by a priest or minister, as meriting the church's wrath here and God's wrath hereafter. The Christian has enjoyed hearing the Liberal damned for eighteen centuries, but because the Liberal has hinted now and then during the past few years, that if any one merits such a fate, it is not himself, the Christian feels hurt, and says that Liberals do nothing but preach against Christianity.

It is hard to be condemned, if you are a Christian; but it is all right if you are a Liberal. It is

hard to hear one's faith criticised and ridiculed—if you are a Christian, but it makes no difference if you are a Radical. It is unkind to speak with want of reverence for certain men, if they are Christians, but it is fair enough if they are Freethinkers. The Liberal, if he will not go and hear himself and all who believe as he does, damned for their faith, is setting a bad example. The Christian who is afraid to go and hear the religion of humanity preached, is adorned with all the virtues. If a man who does not belong to the church, or subscribe towards the support of Christian worship, is unfortunate enough to yield to the over-mastering influence of temptation, the pulpit assures us that his Infidelity is the cause of his moral delinquency; but if an Orthodox or Baptist church member is caught in his career of stealing which he has carried on for years, we are informed that Brother Blank was tempted by the Devil, and so we are expected to sympathize with the poor brother—for being caught, and help whitewash him over and make a good Christian of him again. A man may steal and steal, and be a *Christian* still.

There are some people in this world who have not had all their common sense preached out of them, and these people think that it is just as bad for a man *in* the church to defraud his neighbor, as for a man *out* of the church, and do not believe that one should be sent to prison for his act, and the other to heaven. Christian ministers say—

“Open your mouth and shut your eyes,
And God will give you something to make you wise”;

but human experience says—

Shut your mouth and open your eyes,
And you shall find what will make you wise.

Men are learning that humanity depends upon man, and that no words however loaded with

thanksgiving and praise can be substituted for work. There is no God who stands ready like a telegraph messenger to run on errands for human beings, and no Divine power which can be drawn on infinitely to supply the wants of mankind. The sooner we get down to a common-sense understanding of man's relation to the universe, the better it will be for the world.

No man gets anything in this life except by working for it, unless he steals it. There is no open hand in the skies for one, and no closed hand in the earth for another. Nature is not generous to the Christian and mean to the unbeliever. The man who believes in miracles gets just as wet when it rains as the man who denies all miraculous events, and he who has faith in prayer enjoys no immunity from human ills that is not shared by him who lacks this faith.

If the Christian faith offers mankind any blessings which it alone can bestow, we are anxious to know what they consist of. Is the man who professes this faith any more perfect physically than the man who denies it? Is every male Christian an Apollo, and every female Christian a Venus? Does the believer in the Trinity have "features perfect every one, and the disbeliever in the Trinity have features deformed every one?" Do those who believe the Bible to be divine escape sickness any more than those who believe it to be human? Do Christians never have toothache, headache, or backache; and do Infidels alone suffer the aches and pains of life?

Is the man who professes the Christian faith any more perfect morally than the man who denies it? Are all the followers of Jesus made after the model of the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount? And are all those who do not follow Jesus murderers, thieves, defaulters, liars, and perjurers? How are we to know a Christian when we meet one? Does he pay more than one hundred cents for a dollar, give more than sixteen ounces for a pound, or thirty-six inches for a yard? Six days shalt thou labor to find a Christian, and then shalt not discover a single one; but on

the seventh day the Christian may be found—in a church.

There is no difference physically, mentally, morally, or any other way, between Christians and unbelievers, save one, and that is difference of opinion in regard to the character and worth of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures known as the Old and New Testaments; and we think the difference is largely in favor of the unbeliever.

I desire to call the attention of Christians to a certain closet spoken of in the New Testament. This closet is not as showy as some of our modern churches and cathedrals, and would not draw large crowds of people to look at it. It is a small, plain structure, large enough for only one person. Were it found in the store of a second-hand furniture dealer, it could probably be bought for about thirty-seven cents. Fashionable Christians would go to look at it as a curiosity, if it was on exhibition at some Charitable Fair; but not one of them would have such a looking thing in their house. I actually believe that if this closet were given to the most devout Christian in Boston, that within twenty-four hours it would be split up for kindling-wood.

A man called Jesus refers to this closet in a sermon that was reported by one Matthew, who was the author of a portion of the New Testament. It appears that in the days when this man Jesus lived, ministers were in the habit of standing in the churches and praying where they could be seen of men. Jesus expressed his opinion that men who prayed in this manner were hypocrites. While we do not accept all that this man said in his sermon, there is much in the discourse which we can commend, especially his ideas of praying in public. We quote from this sermon, (which, by the way, Christians ought to read,)—

“When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men.

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father which is in secret.”

I would say, for the benefit of Christians, inasmuch as they profess great veneration for this man Jesus, that his words may be found in a volume known as the

Bible, in what is called the Gospel of Matthew. I would advise every Christian man and woman, and more particularly every Christian minister, to get this volume and read the Sermon on the Mount. I really think if Christians would read the Bible that they would not be so bigoted and superstitious as they now are.

I have always found that the less a person knew about the Bible, the more Orthodox he was; and I give you my honest opinion that if people would read this book with their brains, instead of their prejudices, they would be ashamed to think that they ever regarded it with reverence.

This closet spoken of by Jesus has not been used for eighteen hundred years. It has stood empty all this time, and is, as a matter of course, in rather a dilapidated condition. When we take into consideration the fact that there are several thousands of persons in this city who openly profess their reverence for this man Jesus, is it not astonishing that not one of them knows that he ever spoke of this closet? And when there is more than a hundred ministers who claim to be preaching the religion of Jesus, is it not amazing that not a single one ever read his words about standing in the churches to pray where they could be seen of men? Have Christians been trying to mislead the world in regard to their respect for the New Testament hero? Or do they not know that they are hypocrites, and that it was such as they that Jesus condemned for their pious hypocrisy?

We would suggest to Christians that they repair this closet that their Lord and Master spoke of; that they stop up the cracks, hang the door, and put a button on it, paint it up, and then—*use it!* Let them know that it is just as hypocritical to stand in a church and pray in this century, as it was in the time of Jesus, and that if a man must pray, it is more modest to go into a closet than into a pulpit to make known his wishes.

SUNDAY

AND

"THE SABBATH."

A LECTURE

**DELIVERED IN INVESTIGATOR HALL, BOSTON, BEFORE
THE INGERSOLL SECULAR SOCIETY,
SUNDAY, JANUARY 17, 1886.**

BY L. K. WASHBURN.

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B O S T O N :

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1886.**

SUNDAY AND THE SABBATH.

Mr. President, Ladies, and Gentlemen : —

The Sabbath in this land falls on Sunday. This day of rest and of religious observance is an institution older than the Christian church. Sunday is distinctly the Christian Sabbath. The name Sunday was not given the day by Christians. It had been so-called by the Romans, and the Christians accepted the name, deeming it wise to comply with the common phraseology. During the early ages of the church, Sunday was sometimes called "The Lord's Day" by Christians, but never the Sabbath, this word being used to designate the day kept holy by the Jews. Latterly we have come to call Sunday the Sabbath.

The history of holy days, when referred to all ages and all peoples, leaves no day profane. Some nation, at some time in the world's existence, has regarded each one of the seven days of the week as sacred, and set it apart for religious celebrations. This fact robs the Christian Sabbath of its peculiar character. Among the Romans, Sunday was a Sunny day, and was dedicated to the worship of the Sun. Hesiod says:—"The seventh is

a holy day, for then Latona brought forth golden-rayed Apollo."

Sunday was changed to a dark day by the Christians. For several centuries it has been looked upon as a day made holy by some act of God. This notion was especially held and taught by the Puritans, and the New England Sabbath was a day set apart for God's glory, wherein man should perform certain so-called religious duties, and praise God after the Puritan fashion. This idea reached its height in the last century, and is now on the wane.

The present religious opinions of mankind demand a Sabbath more in harmony with human wants and wishes. Each age answers differently the question, "What shall we do on the Sabbath?" and interprets with more or less freedom the character of the day. We smile as we read that the Pharisees would not "walk upon the grass on this day because it would be bruised, which would be a kind of threshing; nor catch a flea, which would be a kind of hunting; nor wear nailed shoes, which would be bearing a sort of burden;" but some of the modern observances of the Sabbath are only a little less ridiculous.

The Sabbath must stand upon a natural want, or it is in vain to seek to prolong its existence. Does man require a Sabbath? Does his best interest as a physical, social, and moral being, need one day in seven on which to rest from labor? If so, then he will have one. We cannot maintain the necessity of a Sabbath on religious grounds,

for all men are not religious, in the popular sense, and, therefore, do not care for a day consecrated to what are called religious observances.

It was once the custom upon Sundays to oblige every person above a certain age to go to some religious meeting, if not sick or otherwise disabled. To do this to-day, would require that men be driven there at the point of the bayonet. We cannot enforce the observance of the Sabbath against the convictions of mankind. Once iron chains were stretched across the road in front of the church during the hour of worship, and were not taken down until the congregation were dismissed. This was done that the people might not be disturbed in their devotion. Neither iron chains nor bigot chains would be tolerated to-day. Men must not obstruct the public ways with their religion, and a church which cannot flourish without using arbitrary means to sustain its existence, possesses no vital or valuable piety. The question of Sunday observance does not pivot upon the claims of this or that form of religion, but upon the natural wants of man.

When churches can be filled only by making it wicked or immoral to enjoy one's self on Sunday, they have ceased to deserve the support and confidence of honest and intelligent men and women. Sunday for centuries has been controlled in the interest of Christianity, and the pious oppression which has been borne by mankind for the last few generations that Christian ministers might have

the opportunity to infuse the poison of their superstitions in the minds of the people, cannot be estimated. The simplest acts were made unlawful on the Sabbath. Men were punished for walking upon the highway or in their own gardens upon the Lord's Day. Women were not allowed to cook victuals, or sweep house on this sacred day, nor men permitted to shave or have their hair cut. The only exercise that was pleasing to the Lord on his holy Sabbath day was "walking reverently to and from meeting." We read that our ancestors were hardy and robust men and women. *They must have been*, or their religion would have killed them!

One hundred years ago people went "three times to church, three hours at a time," on the Sabbath. We believe this record for church-going has never been beaten.

In touching this Sunday question we touch the prejudices of men and women, but we should do *that* were we to speak on almost any subject. A man who would hesitate to say a thing because others would not agree with him, has no business to speak in public. We are in danger of treading upon somebody's religious corns, no matter what subject we discuss. There is not only pious bigotry to contend against, but what is far worse, pious stubbornness.

Some people pride themselves upon holding to the same belief all their lives, and boast that they "cannot be talked out of their opinions," regarding

an obstinate resistance to the current thoughts of mankind as the highest evidence of religion. There is not a single day that Nature does not change; not an hour that the earth or sky remains the same. Why! experience makes us change our opinions. It is not evidence of wisdom, but of folly, to hold on to the same ideas year after year. The whole progress of mankind has been secured by the changing of opinions; by giving up the old for the new. Did we always try not to disagree with people's notions, we might as well be abolished once for all. It is difficult for a man in earnest to steer clear of criticism or condemnation.

There are some people who find fault with the angels because they are supposed to be brighter and better than men and women. I have come to the conclusion that it does not pay to take any notice of the pretended offences of some people. We cannot go through this world and make an honest use of our tongue without making enemies as well as friends. There are a good many folks who do not like a man because he is a man, and a good many others who like a man because he is *not* a man. The friendship of the whole world is not desirable. When a man is going right he does not look behind to see who is going with him. We cannot spend time to go around and ascertain if anybody likes what we are going to say. If we speak what we believe to be true, we need not care for reputation.

Let us look at this Sunday question with honest

eyes, and not pretend to see in it what is not there. There is no cause to fear that another flood will be sent on the earth if we assert that the Sabbath is not a Divine institution.

Sunday is called the Lord's Day, but just what this term means we do not know. We hear from the church a great deal about the Lord. Christians call their church the Lord's house, but we notice that man has to pay the bills on it. The Lord is a good investment. The church uses this name to conjure with. It used to be said that the earth is the Lord's, but man disputes his title today. So his claim to Sunday is outlawed, and the world is taking this day for its own use. Man has been imposed upon long enough by this name. The Lord does not own a day of the week, nor one hour of the day, nor has any man anything to do with any such person. The whole week is man's, and every day of the week and every hour of every day is for man's use and behoof. It is time to end this foolish superstition about one day being the Lord's.

The Christian wants the earth and the heavens, and then wants to rob man of one-seventh of his time. I believe it is our duty, as honest men and women, to plainly tell the Christian church that we want our time for our own use, and also that the mortgage on Sunday held by the church is a forgery. The people of the nineteenth century do not take much stock in the shadowy individual known as the Lord, who, it is said, claimed the

seventh day of the week as his personal property, and issued a command to the Israelites to abstain from all work on that day.

Neither do they have much faith in the equally shadowy person called Jesus, whose reputed resurrection from the dead on the first day of the week is made the sufficient sanctification of that particular time. We cannot see that Saturday or Sunday possesses any claim to sanctity over the other days of the week, save these two mythical events which have been mentioned, and which common sense and enlightenment forbid us to entertain. We must go outside of all theological grounds for the necessity of a Sabbath. We believe in doing what is right on any day of the week, and what is wrong on no day. What we do, does not hurt the day, it hurts us. The truth is, in regard to the setting apart of one day for religious purposes, that the priest and not the Lord was the author of such an ordinance, and that it was done for the glory of the priest, and not for the glory of the Lord.

What will be the consequences, if we allow a church or a religious organization to keep one day in seven for its own especial advantage? If a church or organization has the right to dictate my conduct on Sunday, and say what I shall do and what I shall not do on that day, it has an equal right to dictate my conduct on other days, and say what I shall or shall not do. But if one day is as holy, or no hollier, than another, then one deed is

as proper on one day as on another. Why should the world longer surrender its most vital considerations to Christianity? The common notion of Sunday is wrong, and the common observance of it foolish. The first day of the week is no more sacred than the fifth day, and it is nonsense to pretend so.

Sunday has become the great day to exhibit good clothes. It is an outward Sabbath only. The Pharisaical character of Sunday is one of the worst features of our civilization, and shows how absurd it is to try to dress the life and thought of one generation in the customs and habits of another. Sunday might almost be called Hypocrite Day. It is considered pious to go to meeting on Sunday and hear a dull preacher read a dull sermon, and wicked to go to a concert and hear good music and good singing. It is considered pious to read about Moses, Lot, David, and Solomon on Sunday, and sinful to read the works of Charles Dickens or George Eliot. It is considered pious for the church to take up a collection on Sunday, but a crime for a poor newsboy to sell a Sunday paper.

Christian parents forbid their children all innocent amusement, and tell them that they must not play on Sunday because it is God's holy day. Hoops, tops, marbles, cards, and games must all be put aside as wicked, and the young hearts and minds sent to that intellectual inquisition called a Sabbath School. I believe there is no place where

a child can receive more moral and spiritual detriment in an hour than he receives in an ordinary Sabbath School. The worst enemy of humanity could not have devised a more successful plan for dwarfing the natural faculties and perverting the impulses of the human heart, than is carried into operation in a Christian Sunday School. It is a fact that hardly a necessary lesson of life is taught in one of these ecclesiastical nurseries. Play is one of the holiest things in life, and when our religious observances are as sincere and pure as children's play, we shall understand in a better sense than we do now what is meant by the saying—"We must become like little children."

Sunday, which has been a slave to many, has been a tyrant to more. It is a great thing that man has asked for a day of rest, of peace, of recreation : a great thing and a good that he has found the necessity of enjoyment for his soul's growth. Sunday is the day which in this age should offer to every man the highest and best which his nature craves. We have no right to forbid pleasure to man upon this day. There is no warrant from Nature for making Sunday a day of form.

It is thought by some that man should lay aside his humanity one day in the week, and clothe his thoughts and feelings in sackcloth and ashes. I do not believe in hanging the skull and cross-bones over a single hour of life. What good does it do to make Sunday the coffin for all the other days of the week ? If any one knows how to make a day

brighter and happier for man, *that* is the knowledge we want. What little religious liberty we have we do not want to drape in mourning; rather should it be used as a halter to hang the religious oppression that is still left in the world.

Sunday, as a day of rest from toiling and striving, is one of the grandest institutions of man. It is the way out of servitude and degradation for millions of human lives. Some would make a lazy day of it, and doom the world to a pious idleness, while others would make of it a holiday with a thin halo of holiness surrounding it to save it from those noises and practices that render a common holiday a nuisance; but a few souls that have wholly escaped from the superstitious darkness of Christianity would offer this day to every man, woman, and child just as it is born out of the womb of time. Man's life is better for these weekly pauses from labor. We must consecrate more things to man, and less to God. Let us give to him who most needs our gift.

I do not look upon the Deity as a person who is in need of human charity. For the church to ask men to give to the Lord is to presume upon a desire to be deceived on the part of mankind. Were you or I to solicit help in the way that Christian churches ask for aid, we should be adjudged guilty of obtaining money under false pretences. To give to the Lord helps only the priest. I wish that Christianity could be made to earn an honest living. This colossal beggar gets our assistance

by deception. It is downright dishonesty to pretend that God is a partner in the business of Christianity. The Christian church should be compelled to stand or fall by its own intrinsic worth as an institution. Let it be honest, and claim support as a college or hospital asks for help—on grounds of humanity.

An assumption of divinity should arouse suspicion. We know of no being on this earth higher than man, and all the labor that has been done in the world has been done by human hands directed by human brains, and the highest work that is being done in this age is laboring to free the human mind from the authority of Christian doctrines. We must use every honorable effort to eliminate theology from human affairs.

The chief end of man is not to glorify God, but to be a man. There is far more religion in doing a good deed that shall help a human heart, than there is in singing one of David's miscellaneous psalms. We do not want the soul loaded down with the outworn customs of the race, and Sabbath observances are garments of religion that do not fit the body of man's faith to-day. What the world needs is not to make one day sacred and six days profane, but to have the whole seven days of the week redeemed from all that injures man. I do not refrain from labor on Sunday because I think that God's voice was in the command of Constantine forbidding certain persons to work on that day. I should work on the Sabbath if I felt

that I should be better for working than for resting.

No Christian Emperor fifteen centuries ago knew what would be best for our life and progress, and the running of the railway trains on Sunday shows a higher reverence than the stopping of all travel on this day would reveal. No hour of time can say to another, "I am holier than thou," and for Sunday to say, "I thank thee, God, that I am not as other days are," is only hypocrisy. Man is to make his deeds answer to no hour of the day or week. If our actions are inspired by a good intent, we need not order them by any calendar of piety. Man has too much emphasized the importance of ecclesiastical things. We are under the dominion of naught but Nature. No people's necessity must be a divine behest.

Men have forged God's name to their schemes long enough. The whole world for all time is not to tremble at Sinai's thunder. Let us keep about our religion, and not care for other people's. If we feel like enjoying ourselves on Sunday, we have not to get the permission of some ministers to do so.

The State must also take off the hand of its oppression from the Sabbath. We need no Sunday laws to regulate our conduct on this day. The State has no business to interfere with the exercise of man's liberty as long as he does not infringe upon another's right. We want no ecclesiastical guide-boards on the highways. We do not need a priest to tell us where to go.

I sympathize with the desire for a day when man shall shake off the week's avarice, the week's

oppression ; when wealth shall lift its greedy hand from poverty, and capital take its grasp from labor ; a day when the office and the occupation, when the hammer and the hoe, shall all be laid aside ; when successes and misfortunes are forgotten for a few hours in a tender and just recollection of our human ties and our human destinies. Would that we could have one day in which to forget ourselves in the remembrance of others !

The People are to say what shall be made of Sunday. It is to be employed for purposes of civilization. The Sabbath has been a day on which nothing could be done long enough. The priest's cry of " holy day " is out of date. Sunday is oftener profaned by what is called worship than by enjoyment. The true value of everything is its value to man. It is this value that I would defend with my speech. I believe that Sunday should be an *open* day to every human being, and that men and women should on this day as on other days consult their own comfort and convenience. There must be more minding of our own business in religious matters. We may elect our own conduct on Sunday, but not other people's. If we violate the statutes we must answer to the State, but we may disregard every observance of the church, and no man or woman has the right to call us to account.

I believe in a rational, not in a superstitious or foolish use, of Sunday. It is not a crime for those who believe in Christianity to go to church on this day. It ought not to be a crime for those who dis-

believe the Christian dogmas to go to the shores, to the woods, to the concert, the theatre, or anywhere else. One part of the world should not control the day to the inconvenience or discomfort of the other part. If certain persons desire to hear a man or a woman preach about the influence of the Holy Ghost upon modern society on this day, they should have the right to do so; and, if certain others wish to walk, to ride, to run, to swim, to work, to play, or to do any harmless thing on Sunday, they should have the same right.

A law regulating human conduct on the Sabbath is an impertinence. It would be just as sensible to pass an enactment regulating man's dress and diet on this day. The laws of our State pertaining to the observance of Sunday are not supported by public sentiment, but Sabbatarian supremacy is still cherished. The desire on the part of the church to become sole director of human affairs is alive in its ecclesiastical breast, and the paramount step to this end is the control of Sunday in its own interest, but I cannot think that there will ever be a successful revival of Puritanism in this country. It is not keeping a day holy to pass the time in pious stupidity. It is better to *enjoy* Sunday out of the church than to *endure* it in the church.

In the last part of the seventeenth century, there was passed in England what is known as the "Lord's Day Act." This famous statute was modelled upon the old Jewish idea of the Sabbath, and forbid all work, travel, business, or pleasure

upon "the first day of the week commonly called Sunday." All of the Sabbatarian laws of the United States are fashioned after this English statute. Every State in the Union, with the exception of Louisiana, has a Sunday law of some kind. In many of the Southern and Western States there are provisions against the vicious habits of the region. These Sunday laws afford an interesting study of human nature. In Arkansas the full force of the statute is directed against card-playing, while in California it was necessary to impose heavy penalties for attending prize-fights, horse-races, or a circus, on Sunday. In Florida we find that an individual disturbing any congregation of white persons on the Sabbath is liable to a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars, or to be whipped, with not more than thirty-nine stripes, or to be sent to prison for six months. There is no penalty for disturbing a meeting of black persons. In South Carolina there still exists a statute which provides that all persons "having no reasonable or lawful excuse, on every Lord's Day, shall report to some meeting or assembly of religious worship, tolerated and allowed by the laws of the State, and shall there abide during the time of prayer and preaching." This is not in South America or South Africa, but in *South Carolina*.

Though a person cannot by law in this State be compelled to listen to preaching and praying, which to him is false or foolish, there are laws on our statute books which are a disgrace to the intelligence and religion of the people of Massachusetts.

It may be said that laws which have been continually and systematically disregarded for so many years are obsolete, and that the Sunday laws of our State are repealed by custom and usage. But this is not wholly true. The statutes in relation to the observance of the Lord's Day have been enforced in numerous instances within a few years, and it is a fact that nearly every person in this State does some act on Sunday which is punishable by fine or imprisonment, and that men and women are subject to petty persecutions at the hands of religious bigots on account of the infamous statutes of Massachusetts.

It probably does not occur to the people who seek the pure air of the country, the cooling breezes from the ocean, or the pleasure of a drive along the public highway on some summer Sunday, that they are committing a crime; and that if some fanatical person, who imagines the day profaned by such enjoyment, were to complain of their transgression that they would be liable to a fine or imprisonment for their act, and yet such is the case.

It is frequently asserted, that "while the Sunday laws are yet in force in this State, no one would be mean enough to complain of a man for enjoying himself on the Sabbath." Let us not be deceived. There *are* men who are mean enough to have their neighbors prosecuted under these statutes, and who have been guilty of such meanness. I need not say that they were Christians. I will cite only four cases of many of like character which have

come under my notice. A boy was arrested and fined for skating on Sunday, a few winters ago,* in the town of Malden. A gentleman who resides but a few miles from this city was carried into court and sentenced to pay a fine for committing the terrible crime of trimming a rose-bush on the Lord's Day. Another was made to pay a fine and costs of prosecution because he rowed his children around a pond on the Christian Sabbath. A lady of this city was complained of by a Christian brother for fishing on Sunday at Cohasset Narrows, and was brought before the District Court at Wareham and paid a fine for violation of the Sunday laws.

These cases are sufficient to convince us that every one is liable to a similar persecution, and that these Puritanic statutes that have disgraced our land for 200 years ought to be consigned to the realm of shades. It is hardly safe for a man to pick his teeth or pare his nails on the Lord's Day, lest some Christian zealot who neglects such observances have him arrested for performing unnecessary labor. We take the ground that the State should not give one person the power to injure another. If I ride out for pleasure on Sunday morning, my Christian neighbor can have me arrested for so doing. While he may never be guilty of such an act, I do not want the State of Massachusetts to give him the power to subject me to any such annoyance.

We do not ask to have a law passed making it a criminal offence for a Christian to go to a prayer-

meeting on Friday evening, nor do we want a statute making it a criminal act for a Freethinker to go out riding or sailing on Sunday morning. We are often told that the Sunday law is a "dead letter," but it has had so many disagreeable resurrections that we would like to have the Legislature of Massachusetts kill it and bury it before we shall feel satisfied that it is dead to stay.

We need more Liberalism in our politics. When Christians combine, Liberals should unite. Let us remember that the ballot is mightier than the sword, and that while "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," eternal indifference is the cause of oppression. We shall have no freedom to protect us unless we protect our freedom.

The "Nine Demands of Liberalism" were made by Dr. Francis E. Abbot, because he saw that our liberties were in danger, and that they would be defended only by those who love liberty more than they love Christianity. This Sunday question is another battle between sense and superstition, with the powers of priestcraft arrayed on one side and the forces of civilization on the other.

The inherited fear of mankind culminates in Christianity. This religion, like all the religions of the past, is based upon sacrifice. The Christian church has built its glory upon the martyrdom of man. It is not far from the pulpit back to the altar. The minister, begging for money to enrich the church, resembles the high priest taking the blood of his victim. It is only a more refined bleeding. The gift to the church is regarded as

an offering. The Christian idea is the same as the Hebrew notion, that men and women must do something to please the Lord. This Lord, who was once satisfied with nothing less than the blood of a beast, now is pleased when men go to his church, offer him prayers, keep his day holy, and pay his priest or minister. Respect for the Sabbath is put on to a great extent. A sort of genteel reverence is paid the day by a certain class of people, who, behind its back, as it were, behave the same as on Monday.

A Jewish member of the British Parliament once remarked, that the Sabbath observed by his race imposed limitations on work only, but never on amusement. We are told that Sabbath dances used to take place in the temple at Jerusalem. Think of a congregation of Christians dancing in a church on Sunday evening in this city! It is worse in the eyes of the Christian Sabbatarian to do anything for enjoyment on Sunday, than to do anything for money.

We do not ask for freedom for man to work on Sunday. We do not wish the Sabbath abolished as a day of rest, but as a day of hypocrisy. We do not want to work seven days; we want to enjoy one day.

All worship and no play
Make Sunday a dull day.

The workingman needs a Sabbath. Not a Jewish or a Christian one, but a rational one,—a day once a week when he can do as he likes with his time and his person. Too many are slaves to

labor six days of the week, and slaves to superstition on the seventh. Sunday is sometimes called the poor man's day. It is a poor day for him in many respects, with nearly every door closed but the door of the church.

In London, Christianity shuts reading-rooms on Sunday, but allows saloons to be kept open. How England fears to have her people read ! It is time that Sunday was profitably spent. It has been a dead day wasted in dreaming Orthodox dreams of heaven, or a sick day passed in Orthodox dressing-gown and slippers, piously sighing for the coming of Monday. It is time for it to be a healthy day, a manly day, a human day. Orthodoxy has a pious spasm every time the world takes a step forward. It sees in progress danger to its institutions. It is now exercised over the movement to secularize the Sabbath in New York City. To read the account of the attempt to have the public museums opened on Sunday, as reported by the pulpit, we might suppose that the effort was made in the interest of lawlessness and vice. The battle is being waged between the press and the pulpit. The editors are for opening the museums, the ministers are for keeping them closed on the Sabbath. The press represents the people to-day better than does the pulpit. It is the defender of freedom, the supporter of education, the leader of reform, and the champion of progress.

Wherever libraries have been opened to the public on the Sabbath, only good results have fol-

lowed. It is useless for the pulpit to predict disastrous results from the opening of museums and places of amusement on Sunday. The fact is, there is nothing in the churches that the people want. Men and women are fast outgrowing church attendance as a duty or as a medicine. What people go to church for in this age would not in most instances be a compliment to religion. Church-going is a dissipation to many people, and it has its evils the same as other indulgences. Were we to believe what the pulpit says, we should believe that the only path to greatness or goodness was the aisle of the church.

The receipt for making man "healthy, wealthy, and wise," according to Christianity, is to "keep the Sabbath holy." All the talk about what the Sabbath has done for the world, is pious buncombe. Equal rights on Sunday; no favors to Christians on this day; a free Sabbath and no laws to fetter man, are the things that Liberals demand of the State.

The old Puritan notion that every road that does not lead to a church leads to a jail, no longer frightens people. The world believes with Shakespeare, that—

"Our life exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

In every flower along man's lingering life-way is a voice of beauty that speaks to his soul of beauty yet to be won, and the more beautiful things he passes, whether on his way to church or

on the way to a factory ; whether on Sunday or on Monday, the lovelier will his life become. The rational manner of observing Sunday which characterizes this age, should be legalized by the State. It is now unlawful, and men and women are criminals who simply use their time in a sensible and rational way. It is time to start a Sunday crusade and rescue this day from the hands of Christianity. A Sabbath of rest from work is needed by the world ; but a day upon which enjoyment is a crime ought to be abolished.

“ The fairest rule for observing Sunday, is that which permits liberty to the largest number with the least restriction upon harmless and natural enjoyment,” says one of our daily journals. We agree with this sentiment entirely, and hope to see it adopted throughout the land. Liberty on Sunday is every American’s right, and it should be every American’s duty to help secure it.

THE FALSE TEACHING

OF THE

CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

A L E C T U R E

**DELIVERED IN INVESTIGATOR HALL, BOSTON, BEFORE
THE INGERSOLL SECULAR SOCIETY,
SUNDAY, MAY 23, 1886**

BY L. K. WASHBURN.

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THE FALSE TEACHING

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CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

Mr. President, Ladies, and Gentlemen : —

THE conflict between the pretended religious belief of the age and the actual religious life, must, sooner or later, result in the destruction of the false and the triumph of the true. The church is teaching one thing, while the world is living another. The dogmas of the church are not put into practice, and, what is more singular, cannot be put into practice.

We must have a religious faith that our hands can carry into action ; that the world can live on. That part of the Christian religion that is considered most vital, is the part which has nothing to do with our life, our character, or our relations to mankind. I venture the assertion, that every essential principle of the Christian system might be instantaneously blotted out of existence, and that such an act would not change the real, everyday life of man, so little has Christianity to do with

the living of the world. The common virtues of life, the essential virtues, which are necessary to the preservation of life and property, and to the general well-being of society, are not dependent upon the Christian religion.

I think I do not misrepresent the fact when I say, that the vital part of Christianity is faith in Jesus as the Christ, and that the Christian Church emphasizes this faith more than honesty, brotherly love, charity, mercy, or goodness. It is the distinguishing peculiarity of Christianity. I never heard a Christian minister say: "Be honest, and you shall be saved;" "Be good, and you shall go to Heaven;" "Show mercy, and you shall obtain mercy;" "Manifest charity and brotherly love, and you shall enter the kingdom of God."

It is the truth that Christian ministers teach that faith in Jesus as the Christ is the only thing necessary to secure man's salvation. With this faith we are asked to believe the stain of every vice is removed, the guilt of every crime washed out;—while without this faith, we are told the noblest act possesses no saving power; that the purest character is worthless in the sight of God. Salvation, according to the church's teaching, is nothing that results from living a good life. It is not what we gain by doing right, not what we become by performing good deeds, by developing our natures, by cultivating our faculties. It is being saved from hell.

The whole Christian scheme depends upon an "if." If there is no such place as hell, then no

such salvation as the church offers is efficacious ; and if no such salvation is needed by man, no faith in Jesus as the Christ is necessary. When postage stamps were introduced, they were not received with much favor. An old gentleman, of the conservative school, who hated improvements, and who had no confidence in anything new, wrote under the first stamp that he put on a letter : " Paid, if the darned thing sticks ! " We can say of the Christian, that he is saved, if the salvation offered by the church sticks.

The vital part of Christianity depends upon the existence of a hell ; but can any one who possesses common sense and common enlightenment, really believe that such a place exists outside of the heartless breast of Orthodoxy ? This cruel dogma is the creed of hate. It was born when religion carried its God in one hand and the sword and torch in the other. It sprang from the loins of a faith that has been dead a thousand years.

The existence of this barbarous notion, in an age like ours, is an argument in favor of the doctrine of the survival of the wickedest. There is no language base enough to paint the features of this hideous dogma. No mortal canvas could picture the face of an eternal hater inspired with eternal hate. A person with human feelings in his breast cannot but have indignation and contempt for the man, though he be clothed in holy robes, who says our dearest friends are damned for their faith. It is time that this damning business was stopped. That a man can be found base enough

to engage in it, is a blot on our human nature. That we have colleges for the purpose of training men to damn their fellow-creatures, is a disgrace to our civilization. How men and women of common humanity, who pretend to believe that "God is love," can hold a faith that condemns to everlasting misery nine-tenths of the human race, is more than I can understand. If they said that their God loved one-tenth part of mankind and hated the rest, then we could understand them. But what kind of *love* is that which would torture a man through all the coming eternities for not assenting to a score of contradictory dogmas?

I cannot comprehend how people are in earnest who teach these things. The whole Christian scheme seems to me a farce, and it is really so ridiculous that the best thing one can do is to laugh at it; or, it is a lie, black as the heart of midnight, and deserves at the hands of all honest men the severest condemnation.

Faith in the Christian dogmas cannot be magnified to religious importance. The thirty-nine articles of the Christian Church are thirty-nine poor, broken-down opinions. They are regarded very much as a funeral procession; they remind us of the dead. It is a great fact that not one of these articles of the Christian faith contains a living truth. They are but a string of "canonized bones." In the study of comparative nonsense they may be valuable as relics of a lost theology, but they are not worth a cent for any purpose of humanity. It requires a highly-cultivated bigotry

to see any moral incentive in the doctrines of the atonement and justification by faith, and only a chronic dogmatism would presume in the face of modern scholarship to teach that the Bible is the word of God.

Why must our religion be saddled with the superstitions of the past? Why must our age accept another age as authority? We show the *highest* reverence for what is true, when we *correct what is false*, not when we blindly accept it and live by it. Our duty is to learn the right, not to preserve the wrong. We are to respect the new, not worship the old. None of our modern improvements get into the church—no reform comes from the pulpit. The inventions of the age surpass the miracles of the church. The electric telegraph is a wonder far greater than changing water into wine. The appliance of steam for its many purposes is more astonishing than feeding five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes. To build the Brooklyn bridge was a greater performance than to walk on the water.

How cheap and worthless are the so-called miracles of the Bible compared with the discoveries and inventions of the nineteenth century! It is a fact that not one of the miraculous performances of Jesus is of any practical advantage to the world. We are beginning to understand that the best knowledge is that which helps us to live better, and that the best deeds are those which everybody derives benefit from. It is a nobler work to help the living from falling, than to raise the dead.

We have retained the Bible too long as our guide. Who wonders that our religion is round-shouldered when Israel has been astride our humanity for twenty centuries? Is it not time that our religion became a part of our civilization? After we have been men six days of the week, why must we be idiots on the seventh day? When we have a Government that declares us freemen, why must we have a church that makes us slaves? Why do men profess to believe that the Bible is the work of God and live by the writings of men? Why is Genesis taught in the church, and geology, astronomy, and physiology taught in the school? We have steam-cars for business, why must religion ride in the old stage-coach? We have telegraph wires for every message but a heavenly one.

Science can travel to the sun while Christianity is packing her carpet-bag. Science gets to Europe before Christianity gets off her knees. Science has explained the problem while Christianity was searching for the manuscript. Science has saved the world before Christianity could find a text from which to preach salvation. Christianity has taught the catechism; science has enlightened the world. Christianity has administered sacraments; science has given us the physician and surgeon. Christianity has made a pious scrap-book; science has filled a hundred volumes with facts, without which we should be living in caves and wigwams, or roving like bands of gypsies over the earth. The thousand family comforts that bless

our homes would be undiscovered, and art lie asleep in the brain. In the hand of science is every finger of civilization. The world went barefoot until man learned how to make a shoe. True religion comes by knowledge, hence science more than the priest is the true guide of man.

What is sacred is hereafter to be determined by its *use* to mankind. We are getting to reverence most what most helps humanity. The speech that will throw light upon the dark places in life, is the speech that we are waiting to hear. The words that will make clear the vexed questions of the hour, are the words we want spoken. It is useless to oppose our modern thought with a text of Hebrew or Greek. "Thus saith the Lord" has been repeated to his shame quite times enough. Men are striving to-day to do only what their own convictions warrant, and in this attempt is the promise of a larger life for mankind.

Were the same reverence shown the works of Emerson and Carlyle that is manifested for the Gospels, which would make the writings of these men as familiar as are the words of Matthew and Luke, I believe a more self-reliant, manly, and womanly character would be possessed by the world. Few persons are acquainted with the best literature of this age—with the thoughts that spring from the rising faith of man. Only a few thousand copies of the best books are in circulation, but it is a fact that wherever our modern authors—those who declare the latest thoughts of man upon the great questions of the hour—are

read, faith in the Christian superstition is losing its power over the human mind. Our duty is to our age. We want no altar whereon to sacrifice our thoughts and feelings. We are to report what our own life inspires, and let what we say stand or fall. We can and will have no book, no man for authority.

I attach no great importance to the words which any man has uttered. No language holds infallible above an hour. The spirit is not bound by its report. The idea of infallibility which possesses the mind of Christendom dwarfs the soul. Let us cease this foolish reverence of opinion. There are no two such tyrants in the world as fashion and authority, and yet fashion is only what certain people wear, and authority only what certain people say. Let people change their clothes and fashion changes. Let them change their opinions and authority changes. How cheaply do we surrender our independence! If our thought is true, it needs no endorsement. If our action is right, it requires no defence. Three thousand years ago this spirit of reverence for opinions was born in a Hebrew camp—it has grown ever since. It began by worshipping a golden calf; it ends in a Papal bull. Let us no longer follow the false teaching of the church, but the truer teaching of reason and conscience.

The Christian Scriptures should no longer be honored as anything divine. Must we honor barbarity, indecency, and untruth, because ministers have not the courage to obey the instincts of their

natures, and declare that there is no divinity in writing that makes the very page that bears it blush with shame? We need one generation of honest-speaking men in the pulpit. We need to have a professional chair of common sense in our theological seminaries. The vanity, nonsense, and humbug that are marked "Christian," and that men and women reverence with bowed heads and pious "amens!" should be exposed and swept away. We are not to pay respect to the superstitions of *this* age any more than to the superstitions of the past. One man owes no allegiance to another except of brotherhood. Jesus has no claim upon the world only as a man. I count no dogma of the church falser than that of the divinity of Jesus. There is no basis of fact for a single assertion in regard to this man. There is not one line of historical truth in the four Gospels. Not a statement about this person can be proved. We do not positively know that he ever lived on the earth. And yet we are expected to accept this stupendous dogma on the say-so of the Christian church!

I know that men of brains, men of heart, men of large vision and deep feeling, hold this superstition. I know that women who love their race, as the best women love humanity, women of mind, of soul, of conscience, hold this superstition, but they are all wrong, and I cannot help believing that they hold it as an inheritance, as a cultivation, and not as an intellectual conviction. We must declare that this superstition is a great evil, a

great stain upon the intelligence of to-day. It is morally wrong, intellectually false as well as naturally impossible.

We say to the Christian church :—" Make Jesus mean all that man may mean ; make him say all that man may say ; make him do all that man may do ; but no more. Crown his head with every glory of intellect, wreath his heart with every garland of affection, endow his arm with every possibility of strength, make him if you will a genius of power, of love, of mind, a miracle of humanity; but go no farther. When you say that this being was God—common sense, all of our knowledge and all of our ignorance cry, hold ! This is idolatry, and the spirit of the nineteenth century cannot bow to an idol."

There is no truth in this dogma of the divinity of Jesus, no sense in it, no religion in it. It is the product of mythology, and has no claim upon this age. I cannot see that this man of the Gospels so surpassed his race that all mankind for all time to come must look to him as the model of human character and the director of human destiny. The church bids the world "Come to Jesus," but there is no more call to be a man in such an invitation than there is a bugle blast in the toot of a pumpkin vine trumpet. We advise the world to stop going to Jesus, and everybody else. We say, with all respect for this man, and with full appreciation for "what he was and all he did," that he stands in the way of the world's progress, and must be put aside. The theological Jesus of Christian worship is a myth. There never existed such a being.

"The man of Nazareth," "the Christ of the Gospels," and "the Son of God," are all spoken of as Jesus, and the confusion of these terms under one name makes it impossible to speak of Jesus as a man and of Jesus as a myth without being misunderstood by Christians. We wish to make the positive declaration, that at least two out of the three persons generally called Jesus never had even the shadow of an existence, and that the third one has not one square inch of reliable history to stand upon. Jesus as the Christ, and Jesus as the Son of God, are mythical gentlemen who are totally useless in an age like ours, and even as creations of fancy not original enough to command particular admiration.

Of the reputed child of Mary and Joseph, we can only say that tradition has given us but the faintest outlines of his character, and that from this indistinct picture it is utterly impossible to build up a man of mental and moral proportions that we can point to as a certain product of human nature. But whether there ever lived such a man as Jesus of Nazareth or not, this generation, in its daily life, in its living and working, in its suffering and sorrow, is not materially concerned. The entire teaching of the Christian church in respect to the nature, character, and office of Jesus is false. No man or woman has less to do as a member of society, less to bear as a physical and moral being, less to encounter in the bitter struggle of existence, for the life and death of Jesus; and I cannot comprehend how ministers can in good

faith prescribe this man's name as a "salve for all wounds" that "flesh is heir to." Jesus as "the Saviour of man" saves man from nothing on earth; and, therefore, while here, we need have nothing to do with him.

It is time that the Christian church told what it means by a Holy Ghost. This "missing link" between the human and divine, is a creation of nothing from the realm of nowhere. It is the great unknown—a thing that never existed. The story that this thing materialized in the form of a dove some ten thousand years ago, is a feathery falsehood. A more unsubstantial being never eclipsed the intellect of man. No creature ever impressed its existence upon the retina of the mind with less show of actual being. What mortal blew this bubble of nothingness from the bowl of fancy is not material to our purpose, but that men and women of apparent good sense can credit this foolish fancy with any religious importance, is astonishing. When we reflect that this being came upon the stage of life only to dishonor what we regard as pure, and that the veil of sacredness has been woven to protect the deed from just condemnation, we are at a loss to account for human credulity.

I prefer to honor men and women who have kept themselves pure in life, who have improved the world by living in it, rather than a ghost who appeared only once upon the earth, and then to commit an act which in man would be a crime.

This third part of Orthodox Deity we will dismiss without a benediction.

The dogma of the Trinity is like a story that begins in the middle and leaves off at both ends. I sometimes think that this dogma was intended as a joke. If it had been formulated by a Massachusetts Legislature, I should not hesitate to accept it as a serious contribution to theological literature; for a body of men that will refuse by a vote of 118 to 55 to repeal a statute that declares that a disbelief in the existence of God affects the credibility of a witness, could seriously fashion even a more stupid dogma than this pious muddle of a God, a man, and a ghost.

Another individual, of no particular gender, but possessing masculine proclivities, that has figured quite prominently in homiletic discourse, is an individual spoken of as the devil. This person has the honor of being the sea-serpent of pious literature. He was seen by our deeply-lamented first parents and caused them considerable trouble, if we can believe divine fables. He came to the surface again about nineteen hundred years ago, and tried to interfere with the fulfillment of certain prophecies made by some Hebrew poets a few centuries before. We read also that Luther saw him, and threw his inkstand at him. He appeared frequently to our Puritan progenitors, and sent terror into many a Godly breast. This strange being seems to have an affinity for whatever is pious and holy, and it is worthy of comment that

he has never been seen by unbelievers and Infidels. It is strange how much of what is called Christianity hangs upon as slender a thread as the existence of a personal devil! Nearly all the dramatic power of the Gospels would be lost without Satan.

Orthodoxy has probably frightened half the people into its churches, who have joined them, by picturing this imaginary individual. With due respect for his Satanic majesty, and for those who have furnished the world with the story of his doings, we must say that if he really has an existence, and has figured as prominently in the affairs of the Christian world as some profess to believe, he deserves to be incorporated as the fourth person in the Orthodox Godhead and respectfully addressed as "Holy Devil." Take away the false teaching of the church, that which is based upon ancient fiction, and nearly all that Christian ministers have said for two hundred years is worthless. It is time that we said to the pulpit—"No more fables, if you please. Tell us the truth if you dare do so; if not, keep silent."

Two things will force themselves upon the student of the Christian religion, namely: that Christianity is not the truth, and that they who accept Christianity are afraid of the truth. It has been the custom so long to preach the Christian doctrines as true, that he who attempts to criticise these doctrines is regarded as a blasphemer. It is under this imputation that every man must stand who would speak for more light. Am I wrong

when I say that the Christian church is teaching what is false? It teaches that man was created perfect; that is, that man at the threshold of human existence was more enlightened and cultivated than he is to day after thousands of years of labor and experience. Where are the facts to support this assertion? It teaches also that man fell from this created eminence, and that every human being bears the mark of the fall. Where is the proof that mankind has grown more ignorant and degraded, with the lapse of time, and what birth-mark of our humanity is the sign of depravity? It is enough to prove the Christian doctrine of original sin and its consequent fate of depravity a priestly falsehood, to point to the present prosperous condition of humanity. Prosperity of all kinds, as every one knows, rests upon virtues and not vices. If the Christian idea of man was true, the preponderance of evil in human nature would long ago have sunk the entire human race in the darkness of death.

The church teaches that God cursed the ground on account of man's disobedience, and caused it to yield its fruits to man only through the toil of cultivation and harvest. Upon what evidence is it declared that the earth ever gave its products without planting and cultivating? It teaches that God has worked miracles to reveal his power and glory. I should like to see one of these reputed miracles cross-questioned by a clever lawyer. It would be speedily reduced to an ordinary occurrence. When reading accounts of wonderful per-

formances, we are reminded of the Irishman who told his master that the horse cleared a seven rail fence; but, upon being rebuked for telling such an improbable story, got out of it by saying that "when he did it he went under the fence!" Nature is the only miracle. We must frankly declare that we think that the Christian church is teaching very much that is false and very little that is true.

I look upon the great organized tyranny of superstition and fear called Christianity, with its reigning priests and slavish subjects, as the worst evil that haunts our earth. I believe we are to be good, kind, just, and religious, but not Christians. We need more words of honest criticism spoken,—words inspired more by love of man than by love of the church.

I know there are evils in human life, but can we overcome them with superstitions better than with the truth? I know there are bad men in the world, but can we correct them with false doctrines better than with true ones? Over me Christianity has no power. I regard its theology as false and debasing, and the idea of human nature it inculcates as an outrage. I would not weave words to veil the iniquity of mankind. There is no good purpose served by denying the meanness and vice of men. But I would not refuse to recognize the noble character and moral strength which humanity has developed. I do not want to hear the power of our nature denied

or maligned. I acknowledge man's weakness, but I assert his strength. I count the number of human beings in civilized society who are unable to live moral lives so small as not to be worthy of estimation.

I believe that under the truer teachings of Liberalism, man would become truer, nobler, and better in every respect. Liberalism is working to assist man, not to save him. Advancement is superior to salvation. To get more is greater than to save what we already have. A step forward of Christianity is away from superstition, away from bigotry, away from fear. It takes man into the atmosphere of freedom. It restores to him the normal use of his faculties. It makes him more of a man. It brings his thoughts to the problems of every-day life. A mansion in the sky is not the object of human ambition to-day so much as a house on the earth.

The world has given up practicing the Christian doctrines. It is time for the priest to give up preaching them. You can build a church on these doctrines, you cannot build a home on them. There is something better that we can teach than the dogmas of the church. We can teach common sense, how to live, how to treat our neighbors. We can tell men to treat their wives with affection, tell children to honor their parents, and parents to respect their children. We can tell men to speak the truth, keep sober, be honest, and industrious, pay their debts, and be kind to

those in misfortune. We can speak against vices, bad habits, bad manners, and show the world by our conduct that we practice what we preach.

Man needs no Christ to save him hereafter; no Bible to guide him wrong here; no church to rob him of his hard-earned wages. We want man educated to make him healthy, moral, upright, generous, kind, and true. Show me a nation where theology sits upon a throne, and I will show you a people that live in hovels and dress in rags. Point to the country where liberty reigns, and I will point you to a people educated and prosperous. The schools of a nation are the thermometer of its civilization. These truths should teach us the lesson of foolish and excessive reverence of names and things. A timid and too conservative attitude towards ancient customs and objects is easily led into idolatry. We must not prostrate ourselves before things called divine. We honor the gods that serve us, not those that trample upon us.

The objects of human worship too often stand in the way of human advancement. With the destruction of Christianity would come a better religion. As Emerson says:—"When the holy gods go the gods arrive."

In ancient literature is a fable of a man and his modern God in apt illustration of our criticism of the Christian theology.

This man had a wooden god which he worshipped day by day, and being poor and often in

distress, used to pray to his god for wealth. After doing this for a long time without his prayers being answered, he became disappointed, and one day while in a passion of anger against the impotency or obstinacy of his deity in refusing to heed his petition, he seized the god by the legs, knocked him against the floor, and broke him in pieces, when to his surprise a large quantity of money which had been inside of the god was scattered around the room. Christianity is keeping the world from benefits and blessings which will come to man only through its destruction.

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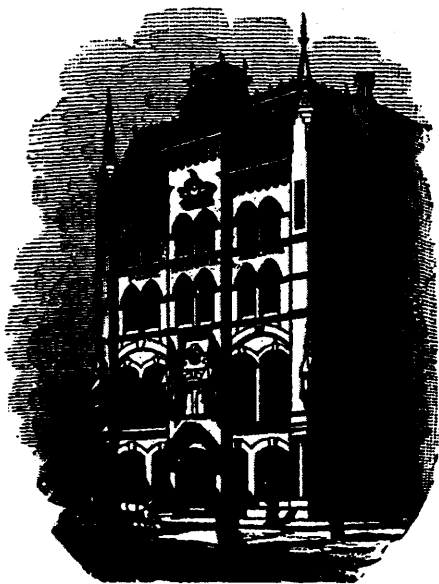
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THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS.

AN ADDRESS

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THE INGERSOLL SECULAR SOCIETY.

BY L. K. WASHBURN.



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THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN:—

“For ways that are dark,
And tricks that are vain,”
The followers of Jesus are peculiar,
“Which the same I wish to explain.”

A great deal is heard to-day about following Jesus. It has come to be a sufficient indication of moral purpose to publicly profess one's self a follower of Jesus. It has also come to be evidence of immoral tendencies to not be a professed follower of Jesus. The Christian church has resolved itself into a returning board, to count in those who profess to follow, and to count out those who do not profess to follow, the man called the Christ, and we are given to understand that “the kingdom of Heaven” is a kingdom of Christians, by Christians, for Christians.

I desire to say at the outset that I do not intend any personal criticism of Christians, and that my purpose is free from malice or ill-will. For the Christian superstitions I feel the utmost indifference; for Christians, as men and women who have had their superstitions imposed upon them, I entertain the most profound compassion. I can but pity a man or woman who believes the doctrines of Christianity; who can draw the line of endless separation between father and mother, brother and sister, on account of belief or non-belief of certain dogmas. There must be an everlasting sadness in the heart that believes in everlasting misery. But we are not to accept all as Christian gold that

glistens with Christian professions. A man is no better than his behavior. We cannot pay our debts by giving promissory notes. The notes must be taken up. We cannot pass in society for what we profess to be. We must make good our professions.

The man whom Christians profess to follow is the man Jesus, whose biography is found in the New Testament. The precepts and commands which Christians profess to accept and obey, are the precepts and commands that are found in the words of Jesus, as recorded in the New Testament. The likeness of this man's character stands out in bold relief, and there is no doubt in regard to what manner of man he was. The precepts taught by Jesus are susceptible of no misunderstanding, for they are in plain, simple language, and shrouded in no ambiguity of expression. Their meaning is as clear as the stars in the heavens, and he who obeys them can be distinguished without placard or sign.

It is a man's privilege in this age of religious liberty to exercise his choice as to what commands he will obey, and our laws guarantee him protection in the full and free exercise of that choice, and our love of right and justice accords respect and admiration to him who lives true to his convictions. It is also a man's privilege in this age to be a hypocrite, and our laws guarantee the hypocrite the same protection they offer the honest man, and our society extends recognition and even approbation to the man who successfully invests in hypocrisy.

It is clearly a man's right to follow Jesus, and obey his commands, if such obedience be not contrary to our statutes and ordinances, and the man who sincerely obeys the precepts taught by Jesus deserves to be honored for his integrity, even though the wisdom of his action may be questioned. We are apt to look upon

the person who stands for some particular idea as eccentric, and to regard the true orbit of human life as indicated by the common existence. We say of the man who insists upon his idea that "he rides a hobby," but a man may do worse than ride a hobby, if it be a good one. There is nothing more needed to-day than men who will stand by true ideas. While fidelity to convictions is ever to be lauded, and faithful observance of what one believes to be right, commended,—pretension merits condemnation, and hypocrisy deserves scorn and contempt.

A youthful artist hung up for exhibition one of his paintings, and wrote under it, "This is a cow." After this manner does a man proclaim himself a follower of Jesus. But if a man strictly patterns after the Christian model, and conscientiously obeys the Christian commands, such proclamation is superfluous. The follower of Jesus cannot be mistaken for another. He bears about him the mark of his character as distinctly as does the flower the evidence of its beauty. The habit of constantly making professions excites suspicion, and he who is obliged to *tell* the world that he is honest, that he is good, that he is just, acknowledges that he has not so lived that men can know from his life what he is.

Profession is the endeavor to pass counterfeit money. When a man stands up in public places, and says he is a follower of Jesus, does he mean to say that the world would not find it out unless he confessed it? Are not the works of Jesus so manifest that he who imitates them can be recognized without his proclaiming it? Are not the words of Jesus so clear that he who obeys them can be discovered without his declaring that he is a follower of Jesus? If we inquire which of two roads leads to a certain place, and we are directed to take the right-hand road, and we take the left, can it be truth-

fully declared that we followed the direction we received? If Jesus said, "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away," and one of his professed followers refuses to lend his neighbor a dollar even to buy bread for his children, and not only turns the beggar away from his door, but sets his dog on him, wherein has he obeyed this command? Is it possible that the devout member of some Christian church who accommodates his unfortunate brother with a loan at a trifling rate of interest, say five per cent. a month, or the wealthy deacon who gives to some pious beggar for a foreign mission, really imagines that he is fulfilling the spirit of this command of his so-called Lord and Master?

I venture to say that if this admonition was to be found in "Seneca's Morals," and we were to read it to a congregation of Christians, that every man present would pronounce it childish, and inform us that this good old Roman could not tell the nineteenth century the best way to invest its money. But because it happens to be in the Bible, these same men pretend that this command is the essence of divine wisdom, and hence hold it to be their highest duty to hear it one day and forget it six. The amateur Christian who boasts of his unripe piety imagines that he has undertaken a light and agreeable task in his endeavor to follow Jesus, and fondly thinks when he joins the church and becomes a member of a Christian Association for the extinction of common sense, that he has taken up the cross which the poor Nazarene bore in suffering and sorrow.

The first performance of Jesus which is chronicled by his biographer, was to fast forty days and forty nights. After this, he was left to sit on the pinnacle of the temple. We read that he was next offered all the glories of the world, if he would fall down and worship

the Devil, and that he was superior to the temptation. All these feats were performed before the angels brought him anything to eat. Picture the modern disciple of Jesus marching off to the wilderness to fast forty days and forty nights! The average imitator of the hero of Matthew's drama would feel that he had sufficient cause for growling at his boarding-mistress if he were kept fasting forty minutes after the time for his dinner. If the ambitious follower of the Son of Man were to be told to sit for an hour astride the weather-vane at the top of a church steeple, to prove the sincerity of his pious professions, we presume that he would defend his refusal to comply with the request by saying that such a thing would be foolish, if not impossible. Perhaps it is either impossible or foolish to follow Jesus in more things than one.

Of the final triumph of the Galilean over the Devil, the Christian of to-day is puzzled. It would not be necessary to offer the followers of Jesus *all* the glories of the world to have them fall down and worship his Satanic Majesty. Most of them would do it for a few thousand a year. The old story of the Devil fishing for Christians, illustrates how the present followers of Jesus would have resisted the supreme temptation of their Master, which he disdained with all the grandeur of a human soul glorious in itself.

It is related that the Devil went a-fishing for Christians. He baited his hook with honor, and caught a few. He then tried pleasure, and he had better luck, but some would not bite. He finally fished with gold for a bait, and he soon had the last Christian in his bag! We would suggest to the man who professes to be a follower of Jesus, that his Master is reported to have been a very poor man, a man who never had a bank account, who did not make making money his business, who had no fashionable residence in the city

or cottage by the shore, who, if we can believe the story of his life, never owned a dollar's worth of property. We would also remind the professed follower of Jesus, that the Nazarene preacher was never married; that as far as the record shows, he was not a husband, a father, or even a lover of any woman. We would ask the man who boasts that he is a follower of Jesus, if he knows that this man spent his time at no trade, at no occupation of labor, that he went about among the people preaching, healing the sick, and working wonders generally? Where is the man who follows Jesus in the works that he did, who restores sight to the blind, purity to the leper, peace to the wretched, and life to the dead; who can walk on the water, still the winds and the waves, and feed a whole camp-meeting with two red herrings and half-a-dozen biscuits?

We would say to the wealthy merchant or manufacturer whose life is passed in getting money, who stands up in a Christian church and says he is a follower of Jesus—"My dear Sir, you are mistaken; you never followed Jesus a sixteenth of an inch in your life; you are only a pious hypocrite, and if Jesus were on earth you would think him in better business if he was working for you for one dollar a day, than he would be going about the country preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and doing a miracle now and then!" These so-called Christians come just about as near obeying the precepts and commands of Jesus, as they do imitating his actions. The great body of Christian worshippers pretend to worship as Jesus commanded them.

We believe that the preacher of Nazareth said, according to the language of the story, that the "true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Where shall we find this kind of worship? Is

it to be seen in the attitude of the superstitious peasant, who crosses himself at the sound of the convent bell? Or in the counting of her beads by the Catholic Sister of Mercy on her errand of love through the streets of a wicked world? Was it such worship as this that Paul and Silas, the Moody and Sankey of the New Testament narrative, conducted in the prison at Phillippi? Is it such worship as Jesus commended, when the minister makes the announcement that "the congregation will worship God with their substances," and the contribution-box is passed around to collect the sinews of religion? for it is money that makes the church mare go.

Is the act of going into a church and listening to a minister pray and read a sermon, and a choir sing two or three hymns, such worship? Jesus taught that religious services were not to be public performances, but private acts, not for the multitude to unite in, but for the individual to show his love and devotion. He said, "Let your righteousness be in secret." Do Christians obey this command?

If we can believe the writer of the story according to Matthew, it was the custom for the priests in the time of Jesus to "pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, where they could be seen of men." This manner of praying was condemned by Jesus, and the person who prayed thus in public was called a hypocrite by this bold Nazarene. Of course, the follower of Jesus, the person who pretends to honor this man above all beings who have lived on earth, would heed these words of his — "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet." Let us see. We go into a Christian church, where assemble the pretended followers of this radical preacher, and the minister reads from "the Sermon on the Mount" these words we have quoted, and then stands up in the pulpit where

he can be seen by all, and prays for fifteen or twenty minutes. "Consistency! thou art" *not* a *Christian* "jewel."

One would suppose that the men and women who profess to follow Jesus would be the happiest, most cheerful people on the globe, since he bid them "be not of a sad countenance," warning them that the appearance of sadness and gloom betokened hypocrisy more than saintliness. But who ever saw a real Orthodox Christian who was a temptation? They all look just as though they never had anything good to eat. When I pass one of these beings who has been soured by piety, I am reminded of the old negro who was seen carrying a small coffin on his shoulder. Some boys, observing the rather curious spectacle, were about to indulge in merriment at his expense, when he stopped them by saying, "Sh! sh! boys; I'se a funeral!"

Christians all seem to be funerals. We read that Jesus gave this command to his disciples—"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven." The man who follows Jesus and obeys his commands, cannot put a dollar in the savings bank; cannot have a government bond or a share of railroad stock; cannot have anything but a Bible, for not a thief on earth would steal *that*! The religion of Jesus was the religion of poverty. He honored the pauper, not the millionaire; the Samaritan in rags, not the high priest in purple; Lazarus with his sores, not Dives with his dollars. The man who would follow *him* must sell *all* he has and give to the poor. The rich man could not enter *his* kingdom of Heaven.

Do Christians never lay up treasures upon earth? Do Christians sell all they have and give to the poor? Are there no professed followers of the Son of Man

among the depositors in our banks? Are all the rich Infidels, and does all the property of the world belong to unbelievers? How a follower of Jesus must despise the man who gives every hour of his time, every thought of his brain, every exertion of his body, to the accumulation of treasures upon earth! Think of a Christian community! No one at work, for God feeds and clothes Christians; no one sowing or reaping; no one running the mill or the factory; not a man or woman taking a thought for the morrow! This community may be found in a grave-yard.

It has been said of our Christian forefathers, that they could pray the longest and drive a bargain the closest of any people the earth ever bore. These characteristics of our ancestors are not wholly wanting in their descendants. We expect the Christian minister who pretends to accept Jesus for his Lord and Master, to follow in his footsteps. We look to see him despised and forsaken, the companion of the poor and lonely, hated, persecuted, and condemned; but we find him honored and respected, the associate of the rich and proud, dressed in the latest fashion, living in good style, and preaching to the best-dressed people in the place. His followers have built him a temple magnificent as were the temples of Heathenism, and adorned it on every side with the richest works of art. This minister of the religion of the poor peasant preacher of Galilee, proudly walks to his pulpit in rich, flowing robes, and, opening his Bible, reads these words to his wealthy and fashionable congregation: "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." We can only say, "in the language of the Scriptures,"—"Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.'"

Should you insert in a daily paper an advertisement after this fashion—"Wanted! an honest follower of Jesus!"—every church member in Christendom would think that he or she could fill the bill.

The church follows Jesus in only one thing; that is, in cursing the tree that does not bear fruit for it. I know of no more senseless or foolish thing for a full-grown man to do in the nineteenth century, than to profess to be a follower of Jesus. Think of a rich man following a beggar; think of men in broadcloth following a man in rags; think of merchants and bankers following a tramp; think of philosophers and scholars following a crank! And then think of men with homes, with families, with the blessings and comforts of our modern civilization, following Jesus!

We read that Jesus said: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what ye shall put on." We expect Christians, who profess to accept the words of Jesus as commands, to heed what he says. We read these words and say to ourselves, Christians can be known by their contempt for the things of the world. They are not particular about the kind of meat they eat, nor whether the flour used in their bread be of the first quality or third. They will not grumble at the cook if the roast be a little too rare or a little too well done, and will not mind if the dessert be hasty pudding instead of pies, cakes, and fruit. We should expect to see them careless of the table furniture, and express utter scorn for such evidences of Heathenish habits as silver knives, forks, and spoons, or for such worldly luxuries as china and crocks.

We think, after reading these commands of Jesus, that Christians have no desire what they shall drink. They would just as soon have water the year round, in summer without being cooled, and in winter without

being heated, or any other drink. Of course, they would not be particular about having coffee or cocoa for breakfast, sherry or hock for dinner, or tea for supper. The idea that a Christian should give the least thought to the subject of drink, is preposterous. Has he not been commanded to give no thought to such things, and does he not have the highest respect for such commands?

And when you come to speak of clothes, we at once exclaim, tailors and dressmakers are passed by and unnoticed by Christians, or looked upon as a set of useless persons who merely cater to the vanities and follies of the world's people. What business has a Christian man with a maker of a four-button cut-away? or a Christian woman with a maker of ruffles and frills and tucks and pleatings, and so forth? Does *he* care what he wears? whether his coat has a swallow-tail or no tail at all? whether it be in style or out? whether his pants be tight or loose? Does *she* care whether her dress trails in the dirt and mud half a yard, or be too short by an eighth of an inch? *She* takes no thought of her raiment. If we pass a woman on the street with a five-hundred dollar shawl over her shoulders and a twenty-five dollar bonnet above her head, we involuntarily say, She is one of the world's people. We should not expect such a woman to go to Trinity Church, or to St. Paul's, or to St. Stephen's. If we meet a man with the latest fashion drawn over his body from head to foot, we feel certain that Christianity has no claim on him. *He* loves the good things of *this* world, and likes the best leather in his boots, the best beaver in his hat, the best kid in his gloves, and the best cloth in his coat. There is nothing Christian about this man. You would not expect to see such a person superintendent of a Sabbath school. Talk to *him* about not giving a thought to what he wears! How can you expect any-

thing else of a man of the world than that he should do as the world does?

But with the Christian we have the right to look for something different, for *he* cares not for such things.—He has renounced all love of display, and follows the poor, despised peasant of Galilee—the man who, we are told, walked with his head so near Heaven that the airs of its pure kingdom were wreathed around his brow, while the vain breath of the world with its idle clatter never reached his ears.

We are given in the sixth chapter of Matthew's story an infallible guide to the Christian character. The Christian, instead of standing up in public places and praying with vain words, seeks the closet of his soul, and there, where no ear is open to his serious desire, communes in silence and in secret with the spirit which is "over all and in all and through all alike." The Christian, instead of working and planning to pile up treasures upon earth, to add to his houses and lands and stocks, to save and hoard his money, "lays up for himself treasures in Heaven." The Christian, instead of caring what color of upholstery is in his parlor, what weight of silver is on his sideboard, what dishes are set before his appetite, what sort of drink is lifted to his thirst, what manner of garments his form is arrayed in,—instead of thinking of these things, he seeks like the lily to be arrayed in the glory of God, and proffers his life a vessel to be filled with righteousness rather than with victuals and drink.

Our purpose now is not to offer criticism of the marvellous faith that God will clothe man because he clothes the grass of the field and the flowers of the meadow; that he will feed man because he provides food for the birds that only leave the memory of their songs in the heart of the world; that he will protect his nobler and more beautiful creation with greater care and deeper

love than he has for what is beneath him. We do not now say that such a faith is childish and foolish. We have to do with the fact that we find this faith taught by one called Jesus, and professed by certain persons calling themselves Christians; and we furthermore have to do with another fact much more important in itself, namely, that they who profess to have this faith, have it not. The first thing we meet in society to day is a lie. Men and women are pretending to believe one thing, and are believing another. They are pretending to live one way, and are living a different way. Christians are to live as Jesus lived, with scorn and contempt for outside show, with no care for wealth, or associations, or family ties, or comforts. Christians, we are told, are the followers of Jesus. We find the cue of discipleship given in the eighth chapter of Matthew's story:—

“A certain scribe came and said unto him, ‘Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.’ And Jesus saith unto him, ‘The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.’”

We stand on the corner of the street, and a neatly dressed gen leman passes by. We inquire who he is, and learn his name, and ascertain that he is a Christian. With the words of Jesus ringing in our ears, we follow this man, and after going a little way, see him enter a gate that opens into a broad, generous space dotted with shrubs and trees, and divided into walks which lead up to a noble dwelling. This man, instead of being abashed before such splendor, walks towards the house with the air of one who is accustomed to magnificence and the luxury of plenty. We ask ourself, What can this follower of the poor, despised preacher of Nazareth want at that house, the abode of wealth and fashion and taste? The man turns the key in the door, and enters the house, as one who is at home with

such surroundings. We learn that the man is the owner of the house, and that he lives in the style of a prince; that he has a wife and children; that he mingles in society like the world's people, and that he is rich and honored among men.

Now, this man, who on Sunday is seen in a Christian church, who claims to be a follower of Jesus, is only a respectable hypocrite. He hates Jesus and everything he said and did. He despises the Nazarene preacher and his precepts. He laughs at the foolish commands he uttered, and treats them with fashionable contempt. *He*, a wealthy and honored citizen of one of the fairest towns of the United States, going to leave his home, his business, his wealthy friends, and go about the country like a beggar, telling people not to work and save their money, assuring them that God will feed and clothe them? Not he. He knows that God will do no such thing. What does he mean, then, by saying that Jesus is his Master, and that he is his disciple? Jesus did this, and was so poor that he had not "where to lay his head." Think of a congregation of richly-dressed, well-to-do American people singing such a hymn as this:

" Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave, and follow thee,
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou, from hence, my all shalt be."

Let us see how some of these people follow Jesus.—On Sunday they go to church with faces stretched to a pious length, and sing lies like the one we have quoted; listen with mock sympathy to the reading of the beatitudes that Jesus pronounced upon his poor, hungry, persecuted band, and note the new bonnets in the congregation, while the preacher goes through with his sermon, and meekly bow their heads to receive the benediction from the hand ordained to bless, and then leave the church and their religion behind, with the satisfaction that they have done the proper thing for Christians

to do. On Monday morning they quote hard times to the washerwoman who works for twelve cents an hour, and tell her they cannot afford to give but ten hereafter. In the afternoon, after having eaten a rich dinner and left only bones and pieces for the servants, they dress in their silks and velvets, are driven down town, where they pass several hours shopping, and return to tea just in time to dress again for the opera or theatre in the evening. Tuesday finds them disputing a grocer's bill, scolding the cook for being so wasteful and extravagant, going to see a painting by some famous artist in the morning, and to a ball in the evening. Wednesday they have a headache and the doctor, the blues and repentance; but by the next day, thanks to the doctor, they are ready to indulge again in dissipation and gaiety, and purchase tickets at five dollars each to hear some popular novelist read selections from his own writings, not because they can appreciate the writings of the author, or enjoy such an entertainment, but because everybody is going. Friday they begin retrenchment again in their household affairs, and try to have the seamstress work for two dollars less a week, and end by having hard words and dismissing the sewing-woman. After this irritation, they order the carriage and drive around to a dozen fashionable friends, and, armed with smelling-bottle and a few tears, relate to the entire dozen, in just the same words, their troubles, and receive from the said dozen the self-same expressions of sympathy and condolence, and return home with conscience relieved, and pen an advertisement to be put in the morning paper for a new seamstress, and finish up the day by attending a *very* select party. Saturday is passed in dressing, going to the matinee in the afternoon, and a lecture in the evening.

This is the way that fashionable Christians follow Jesus! This is the way that fashionable Christians take

up their cross! This is *following Jesus* with a vengeance! I hear some one say, "All Christians are not so, all do not do this," and ask, "Do you not believe there is a sincere follower of Jesus in the world?" I answer, No, not one! Show me the man who is doing to-day what Jesus did eighteen centuries ago! Show me the woman that is obeying the precepts that Jesus uttered eighteen centuries ago! Such a man cannot be found; such a woman does not exist. Do not tell me that the men and women who call themselves Christians, have any real regard for the man whom they profess to honor, until they heed his counsel. Prayer must quit the church, and go into the closet of silence; judgment must come down from the pulpit, and be suspended in a noble toleration; ambition and avarice must not be seen in the pews, and fashion and wealth must be disdained, before Jesus has a follower in the church.—Where is the man who would abide the test of discipleship that Jesus required? Where is the man who would sell all he has, and give to the poor, that he might have treasures in Heaven? If the Christians in the United States were obliged next Sunday to make this sacrifice that Jesus required of the rich man, or leave the church, every minister in the country would find his occupation gone, every church would be for sale, and Christianity be denied with an oath by every Peter in the land.

What right has a Christian minister, who is ordained to preach the gospel contained in the New Testament, to require less of a Christian than his Master required? What right has a Christian minister to admit into the church this wealthy merchant or that rich banker, whose whole life is spent in making money? What does such a person care about Christianity? Jesus did not say, Blessed are the money-makers, but, "Blessed are the peace-makers." He did not say, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after silver and gold; but,

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." What has a Christian minister been preaching in his church that it is filled with money-changers? Why! We are told that Jesus drove these men out of the temple with a horsewhip, and the Christian minister who would faithfully follow his Master must "go and do likewise." The gospel, according to Christian practice, does not agree with the gospel according to Matthew and Luke.

Now, my friends, we do not believe that it is wrong to save the money we earn, to spend it to beautify the spot on which we are to pass our days on earth. We do not pretend to believe that it is wrong to wear good clothes, to look well, and to enjoy the world and its good things. We do not pretend to believe that it is wrong to make life rich and sweet, to adorn our homes with beauty, and our hearts with gladness, nor do we condemn men and women for doing these things. We only wish those who profess to take Jesus for their model in life, to remember that he told his followers and disciples to take no thought for such things, and that as long as they profess to follow Jesus and live as they are now living, they are nothing less than hypocrites.

I am not offering now any criticism of the man called Jesus. I am not pointing out the errors in the theology or morality he taught, but I am trying to show the inconsistency of those who pretend to follow him. I believe that Jesus was an honest man, and lived as well as he knew how to live. I believe that many of his professed followers are hypocrites, and that they pretend to honor Jesus because it pays. I do not deny that there may be honest men and women who accept the doctrines of Christianity, but I do deny that there is a single man or woman on the globe who practices the precepts taught and obeys the commands given by Jesus of Nazareth.

The men and women who call themselves Christians claim that the book known as the Bible is the word of God, and profess to receive it as the highest authority upon every subject discussed therein. "A chain is no stronger than its weakest link." If the Bible be accepted as an infallible guide, and in one single instance cannot be followed, the assumption of its infallibility is overthrown, and the claim that it is the word of God falls to the ground. We find in the sixteenth chapter of Mark's story of Jesus, these significant words, addressed by Jesus to some of his disciples: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." And this is the gospel he gave them: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." And we are told how to know those who believe from those who do not believe. Jesus said, "These signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

We need not be in doubt as to those who believe in Jesus. We will not ask the believer to cast out devils, for we do not know what he would have to cast out to answer the meaning of the word; nor to speak with new tongues, for there is Babel enough already; but we would like to see the Christian believer who will take up a serpent. Let a rattlesnake be carried into a Christian church some Sunday morning, and let loose among the congregation, do you imagine that there would be any ambition manifested by the believers in Jesus to see who could first pick up the reptile to prove his faith? or, do you believe that there would be a go-as-you-please race for the door, participated in by minister, deacons, and laymen? What Christian believer is there who dares advertise that he will drink a tumbler

full of prussic acid before a Sunday school, in order to confound Infidelity? If the words of the Bible are true, every man and woman who believes in Jesus can drink a cup of deadly poison with as little inconvenience as they now experience from drinking a glass of wine. But do you believe that there is a single Christian, who professes to believe in Jesus, and who pretends to accept every word of the Bible as true, were he given a warranty deed of a mansion in the sky, would swallow a teaspoonful of prussic acid? And where is the Christian believer in this city or in any other who can lay his hands on a man sick with the cholera, and beneath whose touch the sick man shall recover his health?

Does the Christian brother, when he is stricken down with disease, send for the deacon or the doctor? Has he most faith in the word of God, or in the science of man? in the touch of a fellow-believer, or in the skill of a physician? We are forced to say either the words of the Bible are not true, or there is not a believer such as Jesus indicated on the earth. Against the man who addressed these words we have quoted to his disciples, my lips frame no words of criticism. Against the men and women who pretend to follow this man, and obey his commands, if my speech has seemed to frame accusations, I ask you if the facts do not support my speech?

Are men and women, who claim to be Christians, aware of the inconsistency between their professed belief and their actual life? Are these persons self-deceived, or are they trying to deceive others? We are forced to say, either they do not live as they believe, or they do not believe as they live.

It is our duty to learn what is true, to have faith in it, and then to live by it. One of the first evils in society that needs to be reformed is, the evil of falseness. Can people regard it as a small matter to believe one

way and live another? This world is instructed through the eye as well as through the ear, and example as much as precept influences opinion and controls behavior. Can men and women, who support the preaching of doctrines which they no longer believe, and outwardly conform to a faith which inwardly they deny and reject, expect their children to grow up honest and true? Will it not be justly said, "The fathers and mothers have eaten sour grapes, and the childrens' teeth are set on edge?"

Not only do Christians deny their faith, but they deny their Master; not only do they not practice the precepts taught by Jesus, but they no longer preach them. There is little resemblance between our modern preachers and those first disciples who were martyred for their faith. There is hypocrisy in this age in pretending to be a minister of the religion of Jesus.

A little more than eighteen hundred years ago, Jesus chose from among his followers twelve disciples to go out into the world to preach as he preached, to heal and help as he healed and helped. That was no light, agreeable task, that those twelve men undertook. There was no certain reward of fame and fortune awaiting the performance of their duties. They were to stand before the world, and bid men forsake their ways of living and ways of worshipping. They were to denounce what was called holy, condemn what was popular. They were sure to meet persecution and scorn, and perhaps death. That was a fate not calculated to tempt ordinary men, and we are compelled to admiration for these twelve brave souls who honored their Master with their devotion and their service. At this first ordination of ministers of the religion of Jesus, there was present no fashionably-dressed audience to murmur approval of the ordaining exercises; no gathered congregations for these newly made min-

ister to show themselves before. There were thirteen men met together, twelve men to listen to one man, and to receive from him the holy orders which they were to obey. Jesus did not tell these ministers to preach the popular religion of the Pharisees. He told them to denounce the rottenness of things held sacred, to tell the people that a new kingdom was at hand; that what was coming to the world was holier than what passed away. He bid them work for humanity, to help the weak, heal the sick, alleviate suffering, and condemn the wrong. He warned them that they would be "delivered up to the councils, scourged in the synagogues, and brought"—as criminals—"before governors and kings,"

Think of a charge like this to some young man to-day who is about to enter the world as a preacher and minister! Think of telling the young graduate that he will have to face poverty, persecution, and public disgrace in his profession; that, instead of receiving a large salary for his services and flattery for his performances, he stands a good chance of going hungry and ragged, and might consider himself lucky if he escaped being stoned. That instead of flirting with the pretty girls and marrying a rich wife, he would be expected to associate with the ignorant and depraved, and have for boon companions the sick and the diseased! An outlook like this, would not swell the ranks of the ministerial profession, and Christianity would not have the attractions and charms that so many now see in it.

Jesus did not provide his twelve apostles with overcoats and umbrellas, and travelling bags, and give each one a fifty dollar note and say to them, hire a seat in the palace car that runs to Jerusalem, and when you reach there take a hack and drive to the best hotel, and there abide during your stay in the city. He did not tell them that they should receive twenty-five dollars

and their expenses for preaching and praying in the synagogue one Sabbath, nor promise them that their sermons should be reported in the daily papers, and that they should be honored by all the Pharisees; neither did he assure them that they should all have calls to settle over wealthy and fashionable societies, but he told them that they would have to take what they could get, that they would be driven from one city to another, and promised them that they would be hated by all men for his sake.

Jesus could not find twelve apostles to-day among all the ministers of Christendom, and were he to give the charge to our theological students they would come to the conclusion that they had not received a call to preach, and would prepare for the law or for business.

What is there about the modern Christian minister that resembles those apostles who suffered martyrdom for faith? Does it require a bold heart to stand in a Christian pulpit and preach about salvation through faith to two or three hundred men and women, mostly women—who would not think of disputing what the minister said, or challenging his utterances? Is there any self-denial in preaching a gospel that pays the preacher several thousand dollars a year for his labors? What heroism does a man display in baptizing with a drop of warm water a score of babies, or what bravery is needed in speaking to a lot of little boys and girls in a Sunday school? The soft courage of the Christian minister who is engaged in fighting the battles of his Lord, is too effeminate to attack the armed vices of the world. The sword of the spirit that is wielded in the pulpit to-day, is a weak weapon, and a sword only by brevet.

The Christian ministers in the army of the Lord profess to obey the commands of Jesus, the Great Captain of their salvation, but *they are only sutlers*. When these armies of Christian warriors who have shouted

Infidel and unbeliever to the world, shall pass in review before him whom they pretend to follow, and shall say to him:—"Lord, Lord, we have preached in thy name, and in thy name have damned those who would not believe as he did, and in thy name have done many mean and contemptible things," unless we have misunderstood the character of the man he will declare unto them, "I never want to know you, depart from me ye that have worked this iniquity."

There is not a Christian minister in the land who is preaching and living as Jesus preached and lived, and to pretend to take the man of Nazareth for a model and the Sermon on the Mount for a guide, is to be open to the charge of hypocrisy. Is it not time for ministers to be honest, and to tell the truth? They know that they cannot do in this age what Jesus did in his time. They know that they cannot preach as he preached, and have a congregation to hear them. There is no demand for Christianity, for Christian ministers, or for Christian churches, but there is a demand for honesty, a demand that men shall cease to pretend to be Christians when they are not; that they shall cease to preach in the name of Jesus when they are preaching contrary to his commands and in opposition to his teachings. Men who profess to be followers of Jesus should either follow him or stop professing to follow him. It is time that men and women laid aside the Christian garment of profession. It is the robe of the Pharisee and Hypocrite.

Some Thoughts on Immortality.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED IN INVESTIGATOR HALL, BEFORE THE
INGERSOLL SECULAR SOCIETY, SUNDAY,
MARCH 27TH, 1887.

BY L. K. WASHBURN.

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THOUGHTS ON IMMORTALITY.

A blind preacher once opened his discourse with these words, "I believe more than I see." We are all blind. What the world believes is more than what the world sees. But let us not for this reason accept faith as a better guide than knowledge. Our eyes are the best reporters of facts. When the blind lead those who can see, it will be time enough for science to surrender to faith.

The declaration that the greater part of our so-called knowledge is merely the statement of what some one else has seen, or heard, or demonstrated, is doubtless true. The large majority of people know that there is such a place as Rome, only from the report of those who have visited this place; so most of mankind accept the conclusions of science on the reputation of those who have made the experiments upon which these conclusions are based. When some explorer tells us of a lake or river hitherto undiscovered, or relates the peculiarities of a tribe of men never before described, we have to rely upon the credibility of the witness if we accept his account. It is not unreasonable to believe that there are cities and towns which we have not seen, especially when people have come from these places, and their reports of such places substantially agree.

Nor is it irrational to accept certain scientific theories of natural phenomena as reliable, when different persons have made the same experiments and reached the same results; and it would be nothing strange if there existed beings on this earth that the eye of civilized man had not yet seen.

But when some one tells us that there is another world, or place, where shall live again every human being that has lived here, that lives here now, and that will live here in all the years to come, we cannot so readily believe. If no one has come from this world, or place, to report where it is and what it is like; if no one is able to demonstrate its locality, and cannot direct the steps of man to its gates, upon what ground do we accept the statement that there is any such world? What reason can we give for believing in any such place? I do not deny the existence of other realms of life, nor do I say that the life that begins on earth ends on earth. But to accept the faith in another world for man after he leaves this, is not so easy. To believe what we cannot see, or know, or demonstrate, is to invite deception and imposition.

But let us understand the real significance of belief in connection with this subject. To believe in immortality for man does not make us immortal, does not affect our destiny in the least. We cannot add to our fate by believing it to be one thing or another. If we are immortal, it is by Nature and not by faith. To believe or deny does not alter a fact. If immortality is a fact which can be proved to the satisfaction of man, then the proper evidence would convince us all. If we cannot know whether we are immortal or not, a belief or disbelief has no scientific meaning. We cannot dismiss the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" as impertinent, for all mankind ask it. The tragedy of death is always being acted on the stage of life, and as we watch the actors fall, and see them carried away

from the sight forever, we wonder what it means. Tennyson says:—

“ Rain, rain, and sun. A rainbow in the sky;
A young man will be wiser bye-and-bye;
An old man s wits will leave him ere he die.
Rain, rain, and sun. A rainbow on the lea;
And this is truth to me, and that to thee,
And truth, or clothed or naked, let it be.
Rain, sun, and rain, and the wild flower blows;
Sun, rain, and sun, and who is he that knows?
From the great deep to the great deep he goes.”

Who can say any more than this, that we begin and end in mystery? In the struggle for life man acts a cruel part. Every living thing is his victim. He kills the animal, the bird, the fish, and eats them. But all Nature sits at the banquet of death.

“ The falcon preys upon the finch,
The finch upon the fly,
And naught can stop the hunger-pinch
But death s lone cry.
Life evermore doth feed on death,
In earth, and sea, and sky,
And that the rose may breathe its breath,
Some thing must die.

The whole history of existence teaches one lesson—that of mortality. The earth will bear infinite forms of beauty, but they will all perish. Man may erect monuments to celebrate bravery and virtue, but they will be built of stone and will crumble to the ground. Religion shall have thousands of idols, but Nature will break them. Science shall have numberless theories, but research will prove them false.

Over all that earth bears has been waved the shadow of death. Flowers fade in every clime; leaves fall beneath every sky. The earth has no plant, but death sleeps at its root. Before death we stand dumb. We are fronted by a circumstance that baffles our understanding. Death is the sphinx of the universe. It preserves its word of silence to our entreaties. No question can open its lips; no prayer can move it to speech. It tells not what it is. The thought of death is a cold thought. But we should not be afraid to think upon this subject. We should familiarize ourselves with this

circumstance, and bring our minds to a wise contemplation of it. There is about death somewhat that repels. It is a sad mystery; but it cannot be an evil, since everything is subject to it. The sorrow of dying is not in the going; it is in the leaving. George Eliot says, "In every parting there is the image of death."

Death is a right termination of old age. When the body is worn out, and the senses are oblivious to the surrounding world; when the mind is tottering on its throne and too weak longer to hold the sceptre of thought, then man dies unconsciously. This is Nature's death. Man was made to die at the end of life; to perish like the tree when its roots can no longer sustain it; to fall like the fruit when the bough can no longer nourish it. All healthy feeling is on the side of life. The struggle of Nature is to live. The hour that death shall come a wooing, and graves be trysting places, is the hour of poetry, not of time. The thought of endless existence is, for youth, health and enjoyment. No one wants an immortality of pain, of suffering, of sorrow, of disappointment. It would be cruel to make some lives everlasting.

There is injustice in immortality. It would be a terrible fate to perpetuate all humanity. One life is as much as some can bear. I believe there has been as sincere a prayer offered for oblivion after death as for consciousness. Happiness sometimes lies in the thought that life will one day end. The thought of eternity is a long thought. To many eternal life would be endless punishment. When life ends prematurely, death seems a defeat of creation and the only chance of compensation to lie in another sphere of existence. The hope of immortality is the desire to give justice to the unfinished lives of earth.

To the ordinary mind, the idea of Spring is always most beautiful and alluring when the earth is barren of verdure and when it lies cold and lifeless in its frozen sleep. The spectacle of Winter is calculated to drive

the mind back to the glories of a departed, or forward to the splendors of a coming, Summer. The compensation of an adverse fate lies in the hope of escape from its cruel bondage. If to the healthy person the warm, enticing thought of Spring-time is bright and joyous, how much brighter and more beautiful must the vision of green fields and forests, of early flowers, and soft, sweet sunshine, be to the sick and feeble!

Was not the world's dream of heaven born out of a cold, sad existence, where a cheerless reality drove the heart to hope for better things in the future? The continual disappointment of earthly hopes forced the mind beyond the grave for that happy fruition of its dreams which seemed destined never to be realized on earth. The first vision of future happiness for mankind was the opposite of its actual condition in life. To the slave—and at one time the larger part of the race were slaves—heaven was a land where he would toil no more, where he would have rest. To the sick and diseased, it was a world where disease and sickness could not come. To the weary and sad, it was a place from which tears and grief were banished forever.

So with every trial and cross that were laid with cruel suffering upon humanity. Men and women have longed for joy, for peace, for rest, and, not finding them here, have looked for them hereafter. But to-day our dreams are changing to battles, our hopes to demands, our visions to realities. We wish still for happiness and for peace, but they must come through right, truth, and justice. We cannot afford to wait for heaven until we die. We want here, on earth, now, while we live, all the splendors and joys, all the conditions for happiness which have been seen in the future and which we have been taught to expect when we die. We cannot dream the old dream of heaven; we cannot see the vision of the future that once filled the heart of the world. We cannot dream of Spring-time when the Spring is almost here. We rather rejoice in the flight of Winter.

The conditions of human life which inspired the popular visions of the future have mostly passed away. Many of us would wish for no other heaven even for eternity than a continuation of our present existence. This earth is as good a place to live in as I desire, and though there are natural hardships in life which we must meet if we live, and natural griefs which bring honest tears to our eyes, still I believe that most people to-day find life enjoyable and desirable.

I believe that men would think less of a heaven hereafter if righteousness and justice prevailed on earth. Let us no longer *dream* of better things for man; let us do battle against the evil things that hurt humanity. Let us no longer see visions of a happier lot for men and women; let us try to remove the unhappiness from human life. Let us no longer hope for better conditions for the race in another world; let us demand and work for better conditions here, and show the world that it is cruel and wrong to deny the human heart its right to "life, liberty, and happiness" on earth.

The future is the realm of conjecture. We stand before it like the boy who is told by his fellow "to guess what he holds in his hand." We can meet it only with wonder. I would not quarrel with the faith in a future life. What I have seen and felt and known inspires in me no wish to end my experiences. I enjoy existence, and cannot say that annihilation has any charm for me. But we are terrified at words. To be alone forever would be a worse fate than to be annihilated. An eternity of one's self would be the worst death. It would be impossible to live without others. Thus to share the general fate is to find the highest satisfaction, whatever it be.

If there be a future life for the human race, we shall all get there. No church holds the key, and no St. Peter guards the door, of our destiny. If we are immortal, we have no one to pay, and no one to thank, for the favor. If we are to live again after we quit this

earth, it is because Nature has need of us longer. We cannot think of life without a physical basis. A future life for man must rest upon the indestructibility of matter. Our fate lies in the atom. To the question, "Is man immortal?" I should not dare answer yes or no. Denial would be impertinent, and affirmation presumption. It is far from plain sailing to accept this faith.

Whichever way we look at this question, we see breakers ahead. Almost every other person we meet is an obstacle to the theory of immortality. There are lots of people who cannot live here, who are either physical or moral wrecks, or both, at the end of a few years of time. When this life fails to afford satisfaction, upon what ground can another be predicated? When we have misused or wasted our opportunities here, what claim have we to another chance hereafter?

What are we that we must live forever? Are we of such consequence that the stability of the universe depends upon our continued existence? Would our loss occasion disaster to the natural order of things? Is man such a vital part of creation, that Nature has no way of getting along without him? We need to have a good opinion of ourselves to think that we deserve an immortal existence. Let us look at this being who demands eternal life.

Put man beneath you, and see him there! Look at him coldly, critically; see his faults, his bad acts, his cruel deeds, his unkind words. His vices how manifold! How manifold his crimes! What evidence of weakness and vileness! Think of his enslavement to brutal passions! Paint his grovellings in the dirt! Behold him living a life lower than the beasts of the forest. See his brutality to his wife and children! See his cruelty to his fellow-man! See him a drunkard, a murderer! You see man thus, cruel to those he has sworn to love; false to those to whom he was bound in honor; sunk in shame, and black with guilt; his face a

map of vice; his heart a corrupted thing, and you say he is not fit to live; he does not deserve immortality. Nature would be merciful to blot out his existence from the face of creation.

Then put man above you, and see him there. Look at him with pride and admiration. As he shines with the light of love on his brow, we exclaim, "Thou radiant orb of life, thy light falls in blessing on the world, and thy glorious beams kindle happiness in the heart of mankind. Thy splendid form, heroic in conception, magnificent in expression, and glorious in revelation, is the form of eternity, and thou wert armed to conquer forever! "

As the panorama of man's history passes before the vision, see his powers and his achievements; his noble deeds; his brave acts; his kindly words; his virtues how lofty! how high his aims! how splendid his actions! Think of his devotion to right, his love of truth! Paint him dying for home, for country, for love of man! Behold him burned at the stake rather than renounce his principles; led to the block rather than betray his friends; swung from the scaffold rather than be false to liberty and justice. You see man there, and you cannot believe that such a noble spirit can die.

Draw the sacred veil aside, and see man in his home, noble, tender, and true to wife and child, every thought born from the heart of love, every word spoken with lips of devotion, and the welfare of others the inspiration of every deed. You see man thus, brave, grand, true, ready to sacrifice his life in the cause of right and truth; noble, devoted, and pure, his knee bent by love, his hand filled with charity, and his words winged with kindness, and you say he is too great to be destroyed, he cannot die. So much grandeur, so much worth, so much heroism, can never perish. Man is immortal. Looked at through a telescope, man is a star; seen through a microscope, he is a worm.

To believe in a future conscious state for man does

not make one, neither does denying that man lives hereafter prove it. We cannot rationally discuss the question of immortality on the ground of faith. Let us meet the question like sensible men and women. What lives, if anything, after death? A century ago, the whole world would have answered, "the body of man." It was taught that the body was to rise out of the grave at the Day of Judgment, and that the spirit of man would be re clothed with its earthly form which would be prepared to feel the joys of the blessed through an eternity of happiness, or to bear the pains of the damned through the long ages of endless torture.

But to-day we know that the body once turned to dust can never resume its former likeness. It becomes a part of the common soil, to serve the wants of physical existence, and the proud king is no more than the despised beggar when laid in the ground together. There can be no immortality of the body. We, at this moment, are carrying around the bodies of our ancestors in our bones, in our flesh, and in our blood. We are breathing the breath which gave them life. Among the countless particles that go toward the structure of a man's form, there could be found those which have filled their office in thousands of living beings.

The idea that every human soul was at some time in the future to reclaim its buried body, would pre-suppose each body formed of indestructible parts which would remain whole until called for. A resurrection of a human body is a natural impossibility, besides being a physical absurdity. The world's faith to-day in a future state of existence for man, does not stand upon an empty grave. We are told by those who believe in man's immortality that it is his soul, or spirit, which survives the act of death. If anything exists after death it must be man as we know him in life, that physical and mental likeness which distinguishes one individual from another. We know that the particles of matter which compose his bodily substance cannot be

destroyed, but the earthly form which we know as man will be dissolved so that one atom will not be left standing upon another.

Is there anything else to man besides his body? Is there anything left after death that we call man? We are answered, "Yes, a spirit!" But what is a spirit? Is it the ghost of the body? Has it a spiritual form by which it can be seen and known? Has it organs, senses, parts? Has it affection, will, mind? If a spirit has form, will not that form perish? If it has organs and senses, will not their power fail? If it has will and affection, will not these lose their force? Is this soul a spiritual entity, an unchangeable whole? or is it a structure of finer material which also is subject to the laws of dissolution and decay? Are we in danger of losing our spiritual form as well as our earthly body? The ultimate of all substance is the atom. If the spirit of man is immortal, indestructible, must it not be an atom, an indivisible substance?

I cannot think that the ultimate analysis of Nature will result in finding an atom in the form and likeness of man. While we are unable to see how man can live after death and preserve his essential being, let us not set up our ignorance as the truth and make of it a dogma. Reality does not limit possibility. We *may* exist beyond this life. It is thought to be marvellous that man should live hereafter. It is wonderful that we stand here now. Future life is only a greater mystery than the present life. That we live at all is a wonder. That conscious existence has come out of the earth is a marvel to me. Why is it more wonderful that life can go on farther than that life can come as far as this? We are warranted in believing almost anything.

We are wisely told that man has been evolved from lower orders of animal life. But what has been added to the brute to make a man? I respect inquiry. This universe is worthy of questions, and they who ask the meaning of things are more the lovers of truth than

those who bow in worship or fear before the manifestations of Nature. I do not ask any man to give up his faith for what science has discovered or for what philosophy has obtained. But I would say to those who have faith in man's existence after death, but no proof of such existence, "How canst thou say to Science—Science, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"

Paul said that faith was the "evidence of things not seen," but we cannot accept belief in a future life as proof of man's immortality. In one hundred years from to-day there will be as many, if not more, human beings on the earth than there are now. Not one of all these millions of beings is born. Where are they? Are all these unseen, unborn men and women living anywhere in the universe, existing as individual lives in some other realm or sphere? If not, is there not a serious obstacle to the faith in the immortality of man in this problem of unborn worlds of men? If man had an existence before he was born into this life, he has no recollection of such an existence. If human life begins with birth on this planet, why will it not end with death? Do we become immortal by living? After once having been a man, can we never be less? When Nature becomes conscious, does consciousness exist forever? Let us have the courage of our ignorance and say only what we know. Like the swallows, we go in the night. I know not whether we go into a life beyond or into eternal silence. Death is a cipher which I cannot read.

The subject of a future life ought not to be trifled with. We ought not to tell a lie about it, not even a good one. We ought not to whisper a false word into the ear of grief, not even to dry the eyes of sorrow. We are all here to seek for the right and true, and if we read the universe differently, that is no reason why we should persecute one another. I hold that error

should be acknowledged and corrected; that falsehood should be denounced; but honest difference of opinion is no ground for enmity. We do not any of us know enough to despise another for knowing less.

If any person can live better here for believing that he shall live hereafter, I would say, "Keep your faith." If a man needs to believe that he is immortal in order to lead a decent life, let him so believe. I have heard people say, if this life were all, there would be no motive for doing a good deed. I do not want much to do with such people. I have also heard men say, if we are not to have another life, it would have been better if we had never been born.

Let us suppose that this life is all, that man does not live again. Even though there be nothing else, though the eyes that have opened on these wonders never open more, yet is it not worth while to have lived here and seen this world, this earth, with its flowers and trees and grasses, yonder heaven with its stars and suns and eternal sky? Is it not worth while to feel and see the soft coming of Spring, to listen to the songs and live in the beauty of Summer, to behold the rich scenes of Autumn when her bounteous hands are filled with a harvest of good things, and to gaze upon the fierce glories and wild storms, when the snow and ice kings are fighting for the crown of Winter? Is it not worth while to see the splendor of dawn come out of the dark East, and with glittering spears of light win the victory of day; to see the wondrous sun as it rises in golden majesty above the earth scatter light and joy and warmth over all the world, and then see it sink into the ocean of its own light, and its memory fade from cloud and sky? Is it not worth while to see night's paler sun,

"That orb'd maiden, with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the moon";

to witness the birth of the stars, and see their myriad host fill the black stage of night; to watch these tireless

dancers, whose eyes never close, and whose feet keep time to "the music of the spheres?"

Is it not worth while to see the world of blossoms, to feel the love that earth tells in flowers, to behold the miracle of loveliness wrought in a rose, to breathe the sweet breath of the violet and anemone, to take these sacred offerings of beauty from the pure hands of earth, and to feel the gladness that blossoms in the heart at sight of these fair, bright children of the ground? Though there be nothing else when life is over, but the sleep of death, is it not worth while to have seen the infinite wonders of Nature, to have looked into the eyes of day and night, to have seen the ocean's grandeur, the mountain's sublimity, the vale's "pensive quietness," and the whole world of fair things that round us lie?

Though we are not to live again, is not life worth living for itself, for what it brings, for what we can do for others and others do for us? Have we lived in vain if we have made a human heart glad; if we have planted a flower of joy in the breast of the world; if we have given a pleasure or driven away a pain; if we have added a happiness to the life of man, or taken away a sorrow? Is not life worth living just to feel alive, to think, to act, to enjoy, to hope? If life ends forever at the feet of death, would this change our love to hate, turn the face of beauty to the mask of ugliness, make the generous, noble heart a selfish, brutal thing, cause happiness to become wretchedness and change our smiles to tears? To have felt the emotions of the human heart, to have experienced the joys of human life, makes existence worth having, though dying be the price we pay for living.

You say that Nature owes us another life to make up for what we suffer in this. I have never seen that Nature cares whether human beings suffer or not. We might starve at her feet, and she would look down at us with un pitying eye. We might plead for another's

cause, and she would hear us with deaf ears. You say it is a sad thing to die and be laid in the cold ground alone, where hands cannot reach to touch hands, where love cannot smile back its love again. I know it is; but Nature does not seem to care how sad it is, nor how human hearts break as they stand at the grave and weep—all that hearts can do that break. The sun smiles on the sad scene, and does not care; the moon looks down with cold, white gaze, and does not care. The stars shine in their beautiful splendor, and do not care. The things of earth that are near do not care; and men, how few of them care when we are dead, and can no more speak and move. Sad? Yes, sad indeed!

They that loved us in life as they shed bitter tears over the spot where our body is laid, make the saddest sight of earth, but Nature does not care. The heavens smile on the tears; the birds sing their pretty songs as grief bends over the grave, and the beauty and brightness of Nature are not dimmed. The universe does not care when one of its creatures dies, and this sad fact is a cold, sad thought. A man here, a woman there, a little child that had just learned to love, cares, and that is all out of this great, wide world of living things; that is all among the myriad stars and suns of the universe, and all we can say is—it is sad!

We ought to adjust our minds to any fate. If we receive a further gift of life, let us use it well. If we do not, let us be thankful for what we have received; and since our existence does not depend upon us, let us consider those things that will tend to our present happiness and prosperity. If we have no faith in a future life, let us use this life wisely and well, and leave it, when our turn comes, uncomplainingly. If we have enjoyed this life, we do not fear another; if we have not, we do not want another, unless a better one. The future is an ocean into which all the rivers of life empty their streams. All that man does is directed towards the future. We look forward, we move forward, we think

forward. Our destiny is always ahead of us. We are working for to-morrow. While I would not advise man not to look ahead of him, I think our first and best thoughts should be for our life here. We should not magnify the importance of any consideration beyond our present duty.

While the occasion of life should ever be regarded seriously, humanity should be spared whatever is dark and forbidding. We ought to encourage cheerfulness and look upon every act of Nature as best. I regard it as unfortunate that we have inherited such dismal ideas of death. Dying should never have been made unnatural. It should have been looked upon as going with those who have gone before. If we cannot look beneath the mask of death, we can at least familiarize ourselves with it and disarm it of its terrors. Victor Hugo makes this observation: "In the hand of sleep is the finger of death."

We ought to say: I know not what there is in the future, but whatever there is I am ready to meet it. Death is only the last step of life. It is merely a step off the earth instead of on it. It is well enough to look into the future as far as we can, but let us not forget that we live in the present. When we have exhausted the here, it will be time enough to think of the hereafter.

Who has filled the present to his satisfaction? What hours have passed that we would not like to call back and live better? What year has come and gone that has left no wish to improve it? The future is an endless to-morrow. The universe is infinite. We share its glories, and are heirs to its stars and skies, to its earth and flowers, to its days and nights. If our inheritance include better things that we have not seen, then may we rejoice. But while the future is closed to us, let us make the most of the present.

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TO
OUR GOVERNMENT.

A LECTURE

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THE INGERSOLL SECULAR SOCIETY,**

BY L. K. WASHBURN.

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CATHOLIC MENACE

TO

OUR GOVERNMENT.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN:—

There is a danger before us to which we cannot close our eyes. This danger threatens our national existence. We cannot be indifferent to the peril which has been pointed out time and again, and which all can see. This menace to our Government is the touchstone of patriotism.

I know that many persons, who see the same clouds in our political skies, deny that they bode a storm; pretend to feel that while they may cast shadows upon our land, they need excite no alarm. I cannot share this complacency. I do not accept this judgment as the voice of wisdom. The signs of the hour, when interpreted by love of country, by faith in free institutions, by pride in public schools, may well cause grave apprehensions for the future of this nation. I am not disposed to magnify our danger, nor would I belittle it. I believe in looking the matter squarely in the face, in seeing the facts just as they exist, and in pointing out, as far as possible, the evils which threaten us.

The question which confronts us, as a people, is one of vast political consequence. I make no attack upon private opinions or private character. I cannot better state the point at issue than by saying that it lies between the tyranny exercised by a church and the liberty exercised by a citizen. The Catholic Church, as a pretended Divine institution, holds man as an individual of society, as a citizen of a nation, as a member of the race to which he belongs, subject to its authority. This is the vital, important point in the impending struggle. This is the bottom statement of the question at issue. This is to be the battle-ground of the controversy in which we are engaged. It is the assertion again of ecclesiastical authority over human government on the one side, and the defence of the right of human liberty on the other side. The antagonism to the freedom of the age, to that spirit of liberty born of political independence in this land, has manifested itself heretofore by seeking to render inoperative those principles upon which our country was founded, and by which our Government has been administered. From covert enmity, the foe of our liberties has advanced to open attack, and from whispered condemnation to public opposition in church, in Legislature, in school, and in print.

What are we to infer from the change in the polity of that power that has arrayed itself against our form of Government? Are we to understand that it has confidence in its ability to resist the influence of our free institutions, or that it defies the Government that shelters it? Does Romanism

think itself powerful enough to attract the moral and intellectual forces of the nineteenth century to its side, or to exert a spiritual influence that shall result in the nullification of these forces, and thus bring the rebellious spirit of human liberty under the control of priestly domination?

No! Romanism is well aware that it possesses no such power. It has no intellectual or moral weapons with which to conquer mankind. Catholicism makes no appeal to the mind of man. It fears the intellectual strength of this age. It aims to disarm the mind of its knowledge; to prevent education, to destroy history, and to overthrow liberty. It appeals to fear; it encourages superstition; it throws discredit upon science, and exalts faith in theological dogmas above the noblest attainments or the purest character. What place in the life of our nation does Catholicism occupy? What has this priestly power done towards developing the mental wealth of our country, towards advancing the moral progress of our people?

Catholicism has cast a traceless shadow on the institutions of this land. It has eaten at our table, kept warm at our fireside, slept under our roof; but it has not adopted the principles of our Government, it does not sympathize with the mighty efforts of our nation to preserve and enlarge our Constitutional privileges, nor does it appreciate the political blessings it enjoys. I believe that the Catholic arm to-morrow would stab this nation to the heart if it dared to do so. I believe that it would tear up our Declaration of Independence,

and our National Constitution, and burn every thought of human freedom that has fired and thrilled the heart of man, if it controlled the destiny of this land.

What Romanism has done, Romanism will do again, if it has the power. If Romanism had no past,—if history had not preserved its deeds,—if we did not know what this cruel, heartless, fiendish power has done,—we might be beguiled into silence or hold our alarm in abeyance; but before the long and terrible accusation which history brings against this merciless oppressor, silence would be cowardice, and complacency would be stupidity. For Catholics we may have respect, pity, or utter indifference, according as their individual characters deserve; but for Catholicism we can have but one feeling, and that is abhorrence. The ecclesiastical villany which this name stands for, can merit at the hands of all justice-and-liberty-loving men and women only detestation and contempt.

It is only just and fair to judge Romanism by its record, by what it has done. The changeless creed of this infallible church binds it to a changeless purpose. That purpose has been written in the ignorance, the darkness, the suffering, the poverty, the vice and crime of every land where Catholicism has controlled the human mind. This tree bears but one fruit, no matter in what soil it grows, or in what political atmosphere it unfolds. That fruit we have mentioned.

I do not believe that the greatness of this nation will be made greater by what the Catholic Church

produces. I do not know where this church has added to the intellectual life of America. I do not know where this church has contributed to the work of science, or added to that vast realm of material knowledge that has elevated mankind in the scale of social existence. I do not know what large gift of the brain, what noble work of the heart, this colossal organization has bestowed upon the world. From its institutions of learning, what distinguished scholars have come during the last fifty years? What discoverers, what thinkers, what poets, what eminent authors have come from Catholic colleges or from the Catholic Church? Is the Pope, the man who stands at the head of this vast and powerful organization, a man that the world honors for his intellectual greatness, for his scientific achievements, for his legal ability, for his qualities as a statesman, for his military renown, for his literary triumphs, for his moral zeal, for his philanthropic enterprises?

No! Leo XIII. has done nothing that the world honors a man for doing; nothing for which it gives its honor, its gratitude, or its love. The head of the church represents its whole body. Catholicism has done no work for the material or mental improvement of mankind. It is a fact that *Rome gives nothing to the world*; that this priestly power is not interested in the progress of the human race, in learning unless it defends its dogmas; in charity unless it goes into its pocket; in labor unless it enlarges its possessions; in literature unless it celebrates its infallibility.

It is enough to say that Emerson could not have been produced by Catholic theology; that Darwin could not have come from Catholic science; that Herbert Spencer could not have resulted from Catholic philosophy; that Garibaldi could not have found his sword in the armory of St. Peter's. Speak the name of any man of this century who has fought for the liberty of his race; who has given his thought to solve the vexed questions of sociology; who has toiled to increase the sum of human knowledge, or who has coined his brain for the joy and happiness of mankind, and you will speak the name of a man who was not a Catholic. Do such facts as these contain no lesson for us as a people?

Our glory as a nation is that we are politically free; that we possess the rights of free speech, a free press, and free education; and our national boast is that the glorious triumphs of this age have come from human freedom, and that our progress and prosperity as a people are due to the free institutions under which we live. Is this glory but political tinsel, and is this boast but a painted lie? Is the Statue of Liberty, that stands in the harbor of our greatest metropolis, only a brazen cheat?

Who is it that assails our institutions? What voice questions the right to the liberties which we enjoy? What power is arrayed against our Government? It is the power and voice of a foreign potentate that attack our institutions and menace our Government. It is no idle declamation, no Bohemian dissatisfaction, no waving of the red flag

of anarchy, that we are challenged to meet; but the calm, studied, determined utterance of a man who stands as the representative of a powerful ecclesiastical organization which recognizes no authority in human government.

The coming struggle in this country is to decide which is supreme, the Church or the State. We must know which voice to obey, we must understand which power is to guide and mould the character of our citizenship. We must recognize the authority to which we owe allegiance. Our National Constitution declares in favor of liberty of conscience, freedom of speech, and of the press, and our Declaration of Independence asserts man's right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." These are the American ideas. These are the political principles that were planted in the hearts of the people in 1776, and these principles I believe live in the hearts of at least fifty millions of the inhabitants of this land to-day. They should live in every heart that beats beneath our flag, and the heart in which they do not live is a traitor to the flag that waves over it.

The Catholics who become citizens of the United States should not only be made to take the oath of allegiance to our Government, but they should also be made to abjure all allegiance to the Pope of Rome. We can have no divided citizenship. No man should be allowed to live in this country and participate in its political affairs who is the subject or ally of a power that is at war with the principles of our Government and with our national institu-

tions. No man who takes his politics from the Vatican should be allowed a ballot in this country.

Between freedom and oppression there can be no union. Between a Government that derives its "powers from the consent of the governed," and a Pontiff who assumes the authority to rule all Governments, there can be no bond of sympathy. A person who is loyal to Romanism cannot be true to Republicanism. No sincere Catholic can be a good citizen of the United States. When this is seen, then shall we know our enemies. Catholicism in this land is not working for freedom, for humanity, for enlightenment, but for itself. It cares nothing for human rights; nothing for political reform; nothing for moral progress; nothing for man as a man, but its care is first and last for Catholic supremacy. This is the lesson that history teaches, and this is the lesson that the people need to learn to-day.

The Catholic power has declared openly that it cannot and will not support our institutions. It has declared openly that it does not accept the principles upon which this nation was founded. It has slandered our schools, and is pursuing a policy towards them that is expected to cripple their usefulness if not to utterly destroy them. What is the duty of the people of the United States towards Catholicism? This is the question that has been forced upon us by events which cannot much longer be passed unnoticed. Only one power can be supreme. The Church must surrender to the State, or the State must yield its sword to the Church.

Catholicism declares that the church is supreme. Every Catholic priest teaches this doctrine. Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin, when they stood beside the cradle of this nation, declared that the State was supreme. The Constitution says the same. Are we to side with Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin, with those who fought for the freedom of this country, and with those who died for this freedom; or with the Pope, and his priests; with those who are trying to destroy the freedom of this land? I believe that those who love America must hate Rome. I believe that those who love liberty must hate Catholicism.

There is one thing certain—if the principles and purposes of Romanism are successfully carried out in this country, the principles and purposes of a free Government will not be carried out. The antagonism of the Catholic power to our institutions has been developed by no persecution of Catholics. The Roman Pontiff, who, from his tottering stage of power in the city which has been wrested from his Papal hands, points his finger in anathema at the glorious political principles which support our nation's grandeur, can present no wrong to his ignorant subjects as an excuse for his foolish performance. No just grievance can be urged by the Roman See for the violent attack upon our cherished rights.

This land has not closed its doors to Catholics; it has refused them no right which other citizens enjoy; it has permitted them the largest, most generous freedom in all religious matters, and has

accorded them equal privileges with the Presbyterians, the Baptists, the Methodists, the Congregationalists, and the other Christian sects. How has Catholicism met this generosity? How has it shown its appreciation of these favors? By insulting our nation and cursing our political principles. Let us recall the warning words of General Lafayette, spoken on our soil:—"If the liberties of the American people are ever destroyed, they will fall by the hands of the Roman clergy." Our liberties have been assailed, and by the very hands that the great French patriot warned us against.

Catholicism stands unmasked. The enemy of human freedom, of civil government, of national rights, shows his hand. These are the words that reveal the heart of Romanism. The Roman Pontiff says in his encyclical:—

"I anathematize all who maintain the liberty of the press and all advocates of the liberty of speech, which is the liberty of perdition. The absurd and erroneous doctrines or ravings in defence of liberty of conscience are a most pestilential error—a pest of all others most to be dreaded in the State. I anathematize those who assert the liberty of conscience and of religious worship, and all such as maintain that the church may not employ force.

"Public Schools, open to all children, for the education of the young, should be under the control of the Romish Church, and should not be subject to the civil power, nor made to conform to the opinions of the age.

"The Romish Church has a right to interfere in the discipline of Public Schools, and in the arrangement of the studies of Public Schools, and in the choice of the teachers for these Schools."

Now let the United States proceed to anathematize the Church of Rome. Let the American people declare that all persons who deny the rights of free speech and a free press,—which are the crowning glories of this Republic,—are traitors to this Government, and must be treated accordingly. Let the American people declare that freedom of conscience is one of the most sacred principles of our Government, and that the power that would use force to destroy this principle must itself be destroyed. Let the American people, from the coast of Maine to the shores of California, declare that the Romish Church has no right to interfere with our Public Schools, or lay a finger upon them in the way of dictation, and that the State alone has the right to control the education of the children of this nation. Oh! for five minutes of Patrick Henry!

What land is this? Is it the land of Hancock, of Otis, of Samuel Adams, of George Washington? Is this the land that resented the imposition of a paltry tax as a wrong to be answered for in blood, and can read the words we have quoted from a Pope's circular to his minions, without the fire of indignation burning red in its face? Is this insult to our country, this challenge of our rights, to pass unheeded?

I believe that Liberty has the right to protect itself from tyranny. I believe that the American people have the right to preserve this nation even if they are obliged to destroy Catholicism to do it. It is on this rock that we must stand. We must say to the insolent demands of Romanism:—"You have

the right to live on this soil, but you must take your fingers from the throat of this nation, and your hand out of its pocket. We cannot consent to see Liberty killed or robbed." Catholicism has been built up by two hands—the hand of greed, and the hand of power. One of these is ever stretched to take the money of the world, the other to take its life.

Our nation stands on the absolute freedom of the individual. Catholicism stands on the absolute surrender of the individual. It is an "irrepressible conflict" between these two principles that is now going on. One of these principles must die, the other will live. The struggle of Romanism is for power, for control of the Government. In dealing with this question we have to remember that no quarter will be given by the enemy that seeks our national life. We must also know that every Catholic can be counted upon to act as one person. Our resistance to the solid power of Rome is to be decided by our love of liberty, by our faith in a Government of the people, by our fidelity to the great cause of human rights as set forth in our Declaration of Independence.

When Mohammed was ready to test his fate by the sword, he addressed his followers, and asked them, "How much they loved Allah?" His followers replied, "Enough to die for him." "Mohammed will conquer," said the Arab. So when we love liberty well enough to die for it, we shall conquer, but I hope there will be no necessity of paying such a price to keep freedom in the land.

The world is growing tired of wars. I wish there would never be used again a weapon of death ; never be again a strife of arms. I wish that one man could never be obliged to kill another. Every war is wrong, every battle is barbarous, every bullet is base, every cannon is cruel. Let hearts and brains settle differences ; let right and truth be heard, and justice prevail. A blow is warranted only in defence ; a man must strike only to defend his life, his liberty, his home, or his property.

But we have no praise for cowardice, no commendation of a man's act who deserts his duty ; who will not defend his home, his fireside, his country, and his country's honor. Let us not be misunderstood. We would not cut down by a single span the splendid proportions of our national freedom. We would not abridge the liberty of party, sect, or individual. We would see the passion for freedom burn brighter in the hearts of this people ; but we would also guard and preserve our liberty from the hands of hate, from the assaults of foes.

Let us fully comprehend what the Roman Pontiff declares in his letter to his minions, when he pronounces his curse upon "all such as maintain that the church may not employ force." Here is a foreign power declaring its right to use force to overthrow human liberty. It is time to tell the Roman Pontiff that he must take back his words. The American people care no more for the Pope of Rome than for the King of the Cannibal Islands. They have no respect for the absurd claims of this

man to infallibility, and he must be made to understand it. Let him ask for reverence from his stupid subjects, but not from free American minds that have cut the chains of bondage from hand and feet, from heart and soul. If Romanism declares war against this Government, we may safely assure it that it will be torn from our soil and driven from our shores forever. This Government belongs to the people, and the people will defend it. Its purpose has been decreed, and that purpose will be adhered to. America is not for Catholics, Protestants, Jews, or Gentiles, but for all, and all must have equal privileges under its banner. One thing must be remembered, and that is that this Government does not belong to any party nor to any church, and that it cannot be prostituted to political or religious proselytism.

Up to this hour I do not believe that the thought of a conflict of arms has crossed the Papal mind; that a possibility of the struggle that is going on in this land would be an appeal to force. Rome does not act hastily. The Roman Pontiff has felt our pulse; and our apparent lack of religious zeal, with the seeming political indifference which characterizes the average American, has betrayed the Papal ambition. The Pope thought the lion was dead, but he was only sleeping. He is now awake, and we desire to repeat the usual warning to this indiscreet old gentleman in Rome, who thought he could step upon him with impunity, to "*Beware!*" I interpret the insolent words of the Pope as showing the animus and purpose of Romanism in this

country, and the policy which underlies this ecclesiastical machine.

If no conflict of arms shall come from the letter of the Roman See, a contest none the less important in its results is sure. The shadow of this contest darkens our land to-day. Rome is fighting the bloodless battle of the ballot. She is plotting to take the nation's life by corrupting the minds of the young. She is sowing the seeds of treason in her schools, and teaching her pupils to hate the flag that floats over their heads, and the hand which welcomed them to this land of liberty. Benedict Arnold was not guilty of a baser treachery to his native land than is Catholicism to the Government of the United States. Black as is painted the deed of Judas Iscariot, it is snowy white beside the action of every Catholic priest who raises his arm to strike down our Public Schools. No man is baser than he who will profess a love of liberty only to betray it. What is the power that Rome depends upon to-day for victory? What is the power that is to be used to close the lips of free speech; to silence the voice of a free press; to strangle liberty of conscience; to close the doors of Public Schools and divide the school fund? The power of numbers.

The hope of Catholicism is population. This country is to be slain by the ballots of ignorance. Liberty is to be assassinated by the votes of a brute majority. As a political factor, Romanism is to be feared. To-day she barter her power for money; to-morrow she will use her money to purchase power. She votes only one way—the way that

helps Romanism. A solid Catholicism is more to be feared than a solid South. We are to meet and defeat Rome at the polls. The hour of patriotism has struck. The times are come again that "try men's souls." The ballot-cry of freedom is heard in the air. Let the roll be called, and every man that loves his country march, with a vote in his hand, to defend his right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Romanism must be destroyed by intelligence. The battalions of knowledge must march against her. Her children must be educated. The State must interfere in the discipline of her schools. The State must arrange the studies of her schools and assume the supervision of these schools. The State must go to the fountain of Catholicism and purify that. It must inform the priest that while he is a citizen of the United States, he is amenable to our laws, and that he must not teach one syllable against the institutions of this nation on pain of being banished from the land.

I believe it is our duty to protect, preserve, and perpetuate everything that is calculated to guard our freedom; to denounce, defeat, and destroy everything that is in any way working against that freedom. Woe to this nation when liberty is forgotten, and when those who fought for liberty are forgotten, and when the blessings of liberty are no longer appreciated!

It has been said that a large proportion of the Catholics in this country are loyal citizens; that if called upon to choose between serving our Government and the power at Rome, they would abjure

Rome. Such a statement is not to be trusted. A man who has been scared by a priest cannot be depended upon. Every Catholic is such a person. Before Romanism every one of her subjects trembles and obeys. Before this master the mind is a slave, the brain is a coward, the man but a tool. I have no faith in the independence of Catholics. Let them take *that* step, and they are outside of the church. That one step frees them. But not many will take it. The truth is, it requires intelligence to sustain independence, and Catholicism everywhere is an intellectual eclipse. The ignorance of this nation is Romish ignorance.

There is not a window in the house of Romanism. When a man enters this house he shuts out the sun-light of knowledge; and his soul, in the darkness, crouches in terror. It is in this dark abode that the priest enters, in this realm of fear that the priest rules. Fear of the priest is the religion of the Catholic. It is by this string that the Catholic is led. Let Rome pull this string and the millions of her subjects will fall upon their knees. Every priest, backed by his church, is a possible Inquisition. Do not let us fool ourselves. We cannot trust to Catholics to save this country from the greed of Rome. We can trust none but those who love America.

It cannot be denied that the Catholic power in the United States is a dangerous element in our midst. This power arrogates the right to rule. It claims that its authority is supreme, and that it has the right to punish those who resist it. There

is no language with which to fitly characterize such audacity. Such a claim is absurd, nonsensical, foolish, but it is made seriously, and millions of ignorant dupes believe it, and herein lies the danger.

The menace to our Government lies in the very nature of Catholicism and in the character of Catholics. Our only safeguard is the education of the Catholic youth in a knowledge beyond the requirements of the church. The State to protect itself must take from Romanism the control of her schools, and, if need be, the control of her property. There must be no teacher in our schools who does not believe in them; no man or woman on our school-boards who is not in sympathy with the purpose of our schools. No man should hold office in this land who is not willing to lay down his life in its defence.

I believe that the fires of patriotism need to be re-kindled on our hills; that the burning words of our fathers need to be repeated to our children; that we need a love of freedom which will not suffer a word to be spoken against her fair name. I know of no word that has been coined from the sufferings of man and spoken by the lips of man, that holds so much of human destiny that is bright and beautiful as the word Liberty. It has the sweet blush of the dawn upon its brow, the fervid light of noon in its face, the peaceful look of evening within its eyes, and the chaste loveliness of the starry night around its form.

Nowhere on the earth has the hand of liberty been laid with more blessings than in this land.

Nowhere have the flowers of freedom been sweeter, the fruits of freedom fairer, than in this country. Shall we, who have enjoyed the fragrance of these fair flowers, who have sat down to the feast of this mellow fruit, allow the tree that has borne them to be despoiled and cut down? Shall we sit calmly by and see the rude hand of ignorance, or the ruthless hand of power, drive from these shores the spirit that has made the name of America immortal? It is time to think, time to speak, time to act. Fate is at our heels. We say to Americans as Cicero said to Atticus, "If you are asleep, awake; if you are standing, move; if you are moving, run; if you are running, fly!"

If the grave of our national liberty be dug in our soil, it will be because we permit it. Let us tell Freedom that she may trust us. Let us pledge ourselves, "our lives, our property, and our sacred honor," to the defence of Freedom. If we love the ground that bore us, the skies that bend o'er us; if we love the homes of our children, the graves of our sires, this Nation will not die; but if it perishes it will be because we prove false to our trust, recreant to our duty, and unworthy the great heritage we have received. So only can Liberty in this land perish.

"So the struck eagle, stretched upon the plain,
No more through rolling clouds to soar again,
Viewed his own feather on the fatal dart,
And winged the shaft that quivered in his heart.
Keen were his pangs, but keener far to feel
He nursed the pinion which impelled the steel,
While the same plumage that had warmed his nest
Drank the last life-drop of his bleeding breast."

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THE BIBLE.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED IN INVESTIGATOR HALL, BEFORE THE
INGERSOLL SECULAR SOCIETY, SUNDAY,
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BY L. K. WASHBURN.

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THE BIBLE.

I am inclined to think that Liberals have yet no more important work to perform, than to expose the foolish claim of the Christian Church, that the Bible is the word of God. As long as this notion is entertained and believed by men, all the ridiculous superstitions that go towards the structure of what is known as Christianity, will flourish; therefore, our duty is to destroy the foundation of these superstitions,—faith that the Bible is God's word. This faith is alive, and is being nurtured by every means that the church can devise.

The spirit we condemn is the spirit of idolatry, that considers the error in the Bible holier than the truth out of it. We can say that a great deal that is in the Bible is good and true, and tell the truth; but to say that it contains nothing but what is good and true, is to say what is false. What we want first, is to get the world to acknowledge that no book, no matter whether it be a Bible or not, can make falsehood sacred. If the Christian Bible is a light that is needed to save the world, men will not put it out. But if it is not needed to save the world, why force it upon mankind? The church has invested the Bible with a power which it cannot sustain; it has given it a character which it does not possess; it has surrounded it with a glory which does not belong to it.

The Bible has been urged upon the world with all the eloquence of appeal, and has been forced upon it almost at the point of the bayonet. It has been offered as the greatest treasure that the universe holds—as the revelation of God; the word of supreme power, wisdom, and love. But when man reads it, he rejects it as anything Divine. It is the plain, honest truth, that *the Christian Bible will not stand the test of an intelligent perusal!* This fact is a fatal commentary on the dogma of its Divinity. I would advise every adult person to read every word of the Bible once, but very little of it more than once. The bad in it does not condemn the good, but the good in it does not make the bad any better. Because Moses said a good thing, it does not follow that we are to read the nonsense of Ezekiel with approval.

The faith in the Bible as the word of God is a holy superstition. This faith is not based upon a candid investigation, nor is it the assertion of an intelligent conviction. As a “book Divine,” the Bible is fast losing ground. From the moment when men were allowed to express their thoughts about the Bible, serious doubts of its Divine origin were entertained. Some published their doubts, and the church, as a reward for their honesty, transported them to another world. Death is a safe answer to make to scepticism. It ends controversy. But the death of the sceptic is the seed of the truth; and so unfortunate has been the church’s manner of dealing with unbelief, that were it to revive its old method of silencing the voice of doubt by silencing the voice of the doubter, every other person in the world would be required for an executioner.

This condition corroborates the Hindoo observation, that “Justice overturned will overturn.” The Christian condemnation of unbelief to-day is met with a smile of indifference. There is a general “don’t-care-what-the-church-says” throughout society. Most men

have come to regard preaching and praying as child's play, and the business of religion generally as profitable only to the managers of the enterprise. Notwithstanding so much has been written and said about the Bible, the world as a whole is yet ignorant of its actual contents and relative value; and this is so, because most of that which has been written and said about the Bible is not true. Christian ministers are chiefly to blame for the false views of this book which obtain in the church.

They do not tell its history, nor do they give their congregations the benefit of that impartial criticism that is the result of an honest desire for the truth. It is the duty of the Christian preacher to declare that the Bible was written by scores of different authors, during a period of hundreds of years; and that not a single one of those authors is known. These facts should be stated. The Bible is not the work of one mind, or of one generation, or of one century, or of one people, or of one race. It contains the thoughts of Jew, Greek, Egyptian, and Assyrian, and these thoughts are often contradictory and at variance with one another.

The greatest struggle of the church is to save its dogma of the Bible's Divinity, for it recognizes that this book as the word of man has no particular value. The Bible would not be printed, bought, or read, if it were taught as the product of the human mind. Tell the truth about it, and the people would have no interest in it. It is the fiction of its Divine character that has given this book a place in every home. It is because the Bible has been accepted as holy that it has been revered.

If the Christian Church declares that the Bible is the word of God, it is bound to prove beyond the possibility of a doubt that God wrote this book with his own hand, or inspired the hand of man to write it. Can it do this?

If not, then it must confess that it is deceiving the world. It is a fact that this book does not carry any evidence of Divinity upon its pages,—not an argument that has been put forth to prove that the Bible is of Divine origin, but what has been refuted. It may be plain and clear to the eye of faith that God wrote this book, but to blind reason and unenlightened common sense, every line in the volume shows that it was written out of a human brain.

I know of no book or chapter in the Old or New Testament that came from the hand that set the flowers in the green fields of earth, or the stars in the blue fields of heaven. I have found no verse from Genesis to Revelation that was fashioned by that power that marked out the orbit of the earth, or traced the course of the sun through the dark regions of infinite space. I know of no sentiment in the Bible that did not come from human experience. I know of no language that a thousand authors could not have written. I claim that there is not a single expression in the entire Bible, were it transferred to any other book, that would stand out with the sure mark of Divinity upon it.

Let us look at the facts in regard to the authorship of this book. Not a single writer of the Bible claimed that he was writing the word of God, not one claimed that God told him what to write, or that any Divine inspiration illumined his mind or guided his pen. They all wrote what they knew, what they heard, what they thought and believed; but knowledge, hearsay, thought, or faith, in these particular instances, was no more Divine than in any other. Why should God assist a Hebrew historian, or a Greek poet, more than an English historian or a German poet? Why help Moses or David more than Macaulay or Schiller? The supposition that he did is absurd.

Christians say to us, "You will admit that there are good things in the Bible?" We certainly will. What we want is for Christians to admit the bad things, the foolish things, the false things, in the Bible. Let us tell the whole truth on this subject, not a part of it. Some of the Bible is good, and some of it is good for nothing. A part of it is sense, but a lot of it is nonsense. A great deal of it is worthless, and not a little is abominable. I cannot comprehend how a minister can say one minute that God's word is pure, and the next declare that God wrote the book of Genesis. I cannot understand how a minister can tell his congregation that God is "over all, in all, and through all alike," and then say that a being born of woman and no larger than himself was God!

We have reached a stage in intellectual development where we must estimate the contents of the Bible by human experience. We do not know how Divine writing would look; we have never seen any. All talk about what is Divine is foolish and unprofitable. We can speak understandingly of man, of what is human and man-like; but of what is Divine, or God-like, we are ignorant. I admit the great unread mysteries of the universe, the wonderful manifestations of Nature before which every soul stands in admiring astonishment. The golden language of the sun speaks of a power that compels our amazement. The myriad revelations of earthly beauty make willing captives of the senses.

When the spring-time comes, the anemone droops its fair form over the ground like a beautiful mourner, the violet reveals something of heaven in its sweet eyes, the lily rests upon the bosom of the water in the white peace of purity and innocence. But fair as these are, sweet and pure as their presence is, there is only earth's loveliness about them. The stars keep up their stately

march and carry their torches through the silent halls of night, but their stellar radiance shows no glory above their own brightness. Great and grand as man is, when standing in the image of his purest thought, of his noblest deed, he is no more than man. We want the truth, no matter what falls before it.

To see the glories of God in the splendors of earth, is to see what we cannot find there. To hear the voice of God in the words of the Bible, is to hear a voice that never broke the silence of the universe. Is it not time that we stopped thanking God for what man does? I believe in thanking the right person. Every religion has imposed upon the world some kind of Deity, and has made worship of God a holier act than help of man. The religion of the Christian Church is merely a commercial piety, and ministers are spiritual estate brokers, whose advertisements read something like this:—

“In my Father’s house are many mansions.” These “mansions” are very desirable as residences for eternity. They are located in a delightfully cool region, and are in no danger from fire below. From the upper windows the eye commands a view of the most aristocratic portion of the heavenly kingdom. The great white throne can be seen without the aid of a glass. The neighborhood is exceedingly respectable, and there are no beggars, tramps, or poor, in the place, to offend the refined and cultivated senses. Angels and arch-angels, cherubim and seraphim, are constantly beheld as they go and come on their celestial errands. These tenements have all the modern heavenly improvements. They are situated but a short distance from a mount whence can be seen the inhabitants of the infernal regions, and one can have the blissful satisfaction of beholding his father or mother, brother, sister, or child, in the tortures of everlasting misery, while he congratulates himself on his election to a happier lot. Any one

taking one of these residences for eternity will be allowed the free use of the celestial harps and all the palm branches that the family needs. Deeds of these premises will be written in the blood of the Lamb, and signed with the names of "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Notice!—No one need apply for one of these dwellings who does not accept the Bible as the word of God!

It is this provision that makes the business so dull. It is our purpose to see why men cannot accept the Bible as the word of God. Suppose an author should write a work to-day with the account of creation, and the explanation of the origin of life and man that we find in the book of Genesis, and should offer it for publication as containing solutions of the great mysteries of which it treats; do you imagine that any publishing house in the United States would give the author one cent for his manuscript, or waste paper in printing his silly stories? Or if the author could get his work through the press, do you suppose any one would buy the book or read it? Think of a man in this age seriously asserting that light came from the command of God, and that the tree, the grass, and the flower, sprang from the earth in obedience to a Divine voice! Think of offering the first chapter of Genesis as a scientific treatise on generation!

But the second chapter of this work surpasses the first in its simplicity. The origin of man by any natural method of generation is not considered by this author. In twenty-seven words he gives the entire process and result of human creation. We have had hundreds of volumes bearing upon this subject, and our most learned minds are not able to speak with positive assurance upon the question of human origin. But the writer of Genesis disposes of the subject in twenty-seven words. He says: "And the Lord God formed

man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Man is the breath of Deity in a bucket of dirt. Let us blush for Darwin! The novelty of man's creation is exceeded by the account of woman's creation. Here it is: "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman."

There's science for you! How revelation eclipses knowledge! What a transformation! From a rib to a woman! A bare bone turned into a poem of flesh and blood! Woman is the fairest dream that ever came from sleep. The Christian Church pretends to believe that the first human body was fashioned by God without animal parentage, out of the matter created from nothing. This is the Biblical statement, the word of God on the subject. But it is singular that Biblical science is not considered worthy of a chair in any of our colleges, or of any more advanced intellects than infant classes in Sunday schools.

Let the work containing what is known as the Mosaic account of creation be published for the first time in the year 1888, and the whole scientific world would be convulsed with laughter over its childish ideas. This is the honest truth about the matter, and for men and women to pretend to see Divine inspiration in the fables of Genesis, and to profess to believe that God was their author, is to ask sensible people to look upon them as lacking that mental attainment and moral appreciation that inspire respect. The world has outgrown the stories of Genesis, and it is time that the church took the stamp of truth from off their brows. They are but the fables of ignorance, and have no claim upon rational regard.

The book of Genesis is a work of fiction, whose characters are not sufficiently exalted to deserve admiration, nor sufficiently moral to be used as models of human virtue. We want no society based upon such behavior as distinguished Abraham, Lot, and Jacob.

Exodus is the most dramatic of the books of the Pentateuch, but its tragedy is of the heavens, not of the earth, and the scenes are moved by magic and miracle, not by human power, and hence fail to elicit our applause. There are some moral attempts in the work, but its decalogue does not contain commandments enough for this century, and the laws of conduct for the Israelites are not fit for Americans.

We have outlived the faith that God reveals his wrath in thunder and lightning, and his mercy in soft winds and peaceful skies; that a greater glory is hid in a burning bush than a budding one; and that an unusual number of flies or locusts is evidence of human wickedness. The fear of Nature's forces that once caused man to tremble, has taught him to protect his life and property from their ravages. There is nothing in Leviticus that a man to-day would need from the hour of his birth to the hour of his death. It is a criminal waste of time and material to any longer publish this book. It refers to what is extinct and what ought to be. Let us bequeath the book of Leviticus to oblivion. The products of the herd, of the flock, and of the ground, we carry to the market to-day, not to the priest.

The greater portion of the Old Testament—that is, all that precedes the book of Job, and all that follows the book of Isaiah—has no historical and but little literary value. It is a vast mass of useless, senseless writing. A few sentences might be saved from some of the authors, but the world's literature would suffer no serious loss were the entire contents of these books

to be destroyed. There is nothing in them that relates to the political, social, or moral existence of this century. We are building our institutions upon the ideas of this age, and we cannot quote Joshua, Samuel, or Solomon, to sustain any single forward movement of the world. These men would have no authority in our legislative halls, in our business meetings, or in our reform associations. We cannot trace our civilization or our enlightenment to the Old Testament.

The book of Job is the first work of genius in the Bible. Here is the wisdom of human suffering, the despair of human sorrow. It is the cry of the human heart we hear in the language of Job. It is the philosophy of the human mind that we read in this poem, but of a mind raised to that height where it becomes the teacher and guide of men. I would admit the superiority of this book, the same as I would declare the inferiority of the books of Judges or Kings, but it is superior not to the works of modern authors, but to the literature of the Hebrews.

The Psalms have been overpraised. We do not sing in this manner to-day. The Song of Solomon, as it is called, deserve immediate cremation. I do not believe that a minister lives who can show cause why this sentence should not be pronounced upon it: This song borders on the profane, and had it been written by Walt. Whitman would be called indecent. But for the Bible covers that protect it, every mother in the land would cast it into the fire. It reeks with poison. The feeling that keeps such stuff as this sacred, need not be called by its right name.

Among the so-called prophecies, I would save the work of Isaiah to show the passion of a man for his country, the love of a man for his countrymen, and the faith of a man in righteousness. The rest of the prophets are not worth reading. But there is one among

them we must not pass in silence. I do not believe in the indignation that dare not express its feelings. We are cowards if we are afraid to tell the truth. We are cowards if we burden those who are weak, or insult those who are unfortunate. We are cowards if we are afraid to do right, if we fear to testify to what we know, to defend what we feel is just, or to condemn what to us is base or wrong.

If we love what is pure, if we love what will keep the heart clean and the soul innocent, we are cowards indeed when we refuse to denounce the book of the prophet Ezekiel. To write "holy" on that book is to write a lie on it; not to write "unholy" on it, is not to do our duty. The nineteenth century may not be pure, but it values purity too much to want that book set before the eyes of the young. Is there not courage enough in this century,—is there not honesty enough in this century,—to tell the truth about the Bible? The value of the Old Testament to this age is the same as the value of the Chinese classics or the Koran. Were it published to-day for the first time, the larger part of it would fall dead from the press or be killed by honest criticism within twenty-four hours.

Of the New Testament we must say what we believe, and that is, that it is filled with a superstition that kept the world in darkness for twelve hundred years. The eternal laws of Nature, the sweet-smelling pages of spring and summer, the joys of the human heart, the grand faith in man, and the "serene acceptance of the inevitable," are taking the place of the outlived laws of Moses, the muddy, filthy pages of Genesis, the impossible events of the gospels, the superstitious faith in Jesus, and the fear of hell which has darkened the skies of life for so many centuries.

Men say to me, "Tell what is good about the Bible; people will find out the bad for themselves." But my

point is this: *the bad ought not to be there for them to find.*" It is the falsehood in the book that I want removed. I know there are great words in the Bible, and beautiful ones, and tender ones, too; but to be honest and truthful we must also say, there are useless words there, and profane ones, and foul ones, too. This Bible is no such book as the Christian pulpit teaches. It possesses no such character as the Christian Church has given it. It has no such value as the Christian world has assumed for it. What is moral and useful, what is good and valuable in the Bible, would make a small volume. What it contains that is of no account to this century would make a very large volume.

There is little, if anything, in the Bible worthy to be called history, from the fact that there is not a single historical date in the whole book. We do not know where one event chronicled in the volume actually took place, or when one of the many persons, whose biographies the volume contains, was born or died. In view of these defects, the historical importance of the book is impaired beyond reparation. It is worthless as a record of human events. The Bible is a collection of traditions which in many places fade into mythology, and in others degenerate into apparent spuriousness. Think of reading as true the stories of the fall of man, the flood, the confusion of tongues, the Hebrew exodus from Egypt, the feats of Samson, the performances of Jonah, the birth and resurrection of Jesus, and the conversion of Paul!

I confess that I should be ashamed to read portions of the Bible before this audience. I am ashamed of the church that teaches that this book is pure and holy, and I am ashamed of the person who wrote what is unfit to be read in this book, whether he was God or man. We have been asked, "If the Bible is not the word of God, why do the eminent scholars and great

men in the church so teach it?" We fear that an honest answer to that question would be the death of Christianity. I want to remove the Bible from the pulpit, that better books may be read from it. I want to have ministers give up preaching from this book, that they may be better preachers and better men. There is a lot of the Bible that ought to be sent to the laundry.

Shall we object to the voluptuous vocabulary of Swinburne, but allow God to write trash? The most objectionable book, from a moral standpoint, in my library, is the Bible. Think of it! The book that is taught by the Christian Church as the pure and holy word of God, is unfit to be read to a public audience! Such a book should be as clear as the sky, as pure as a star, as stainless as an infant's soul. And yet the courts of the United States have declared that parts of the Bible, that extracts from the word of God, are obscene, and have excluded them from the mails! What a spectacle is here presented—a nation ashamed of its God! Let the statute against publishing, selling, or exhibiting for sale, obscene literature, be impartially enforced, and the Christian's Bible, the word of the Christian's God, could not be published or sold in this country. Is it not time that we allowed our moral judgment to pronounce its condemnation against the vile language of the Old Testament, and our moral hands to bury from sight forever the pollution of this book?

I know it is useless to address common sense to people who do not possess any, or to try to make blind bigotry see the truth as it appears to the unclouded eyes of reason, and yet the bigoted, the superstitious, the ignorant, are the ones to be enlightened on this subject. I blame the pulpit more than the pew, the preacher more than the believer, and back of the

preacher I blame the method of making preachers. Hebrew and Greek are not needed in the seminary and pulpit so much as common sense. That is the best interpreter of the Scriptures, and a minister without this equipment, though he be able to cite every verse in the original tongue, may be only an educated idiot.

Hundreds are preaching to-day who do not seem to know one letter in the alphabet of common sense. What is demanded in this age is an honest voice in the Christian pulpit, an invulnerable defence of the Christian Scriptures as the word of God, or else an open, honest confession of the human, imperfect character of the Bible.

Christian teachers tell us that God worked miracles in the past that the world might have faith, and we are told that the miracles recorded in the New Testament were wrought by Jesus to prove his Divinity. What God has done, God may do; and if He worked miracles in the days of Pharaoh, why can He not do as much in the time of Cleveland? If He could come down on Mount Sinai, he can come down on Bunker Hill, and we would suggest that there would be no better way to convince the people of the Divine existence than for them to hear the voice of God, as Moses said the Israelites heard it. There never was a time when there was less faith in the word of God than now, or when there was more need of miracles to convince men that the Bible is that word.

Stories of marvels and wonders cover the leaves of the Bible as stars cover the heavens, and if one thing is taught more than another in the Old and New Testament, it is the power to work miracles. We do not believe that there is anything higher than human wisdom, or anything truer than human experience recorded in the Bible, or that any power but that of man wrote a single line of the volume. Neither do we believe that

a miracle was ever performed by a being, human or Divine, or that the accounts of the miracles in the Bible are more than exaggerations or fabrications; but, if God will make a man out of the dust of the ground in the State of Massachusetts, and do it where I can see Him work, then I will acknowledge that miracles can be performed; or if He will turn the waters of the Connecticut River into blood, as He turned the waters of Egypt, I will be convinced; but I cannot take the word of an unknown Bible-writer that these wonders were ever performed.

The church tells us that the age of miracles is passed, but the age of doubt is not passed, and two or three good-sized miracles might be used by Christian ministers to good advantage in defence of their statements. It does not carry conviction to the mind in this century to recount in the name of some sacred writer the wondrous deeds of David, that holy Jack-the-giant-killer; or to tell us that God once came to the earth in the form of a dove. The natural logic of the human mind is the foe of all supernaturalism. The little girl who asked her father if the mother of Jesus was Mrs. Holy Ghost, hurt the Christian theology more than any labored argument. There is no evidence of Divinity in ghost stories or narratives of fabulous performances.

The one question that determines the actual value of the Bible is this: What is it worth to the world? There is nothing practical in the Bible; nothing that can be applied to one's business or trade; nothing that is vital to human life, or necessary to human prosperity. It relates that God made coats for Adam and Eve, but tailors can get no hint from the Bible to help them in cutting or making their garments. It says that the Lord fed the children of Israel in the wilderness for forty years, but cooks and bakers do not consult the book of Deuteronomy for assistance in their vocations.

There is not so much as a recipe for making bread in the book.

We read that God once worked as a carpenter, and made houses for the Hebrew midwives; but builders can find nothing in the Bible to aid them in their occupation. It tells over and over again, that the Lord God sent diseases and plagues among the children of men, but he nowhere recorded in his book any remedy for the afflictions, and physicians do not get their prescriptions from this volume. We read that Job suffered exceedingly with boils, and what do you imagine the Bible says he did to cure himself? He took a "pots-herd," which is a piece of an earthen dish, "to scrape himself withal," and sat down in a heap of ashes. What would you think of a doctor who told you to scrape a boil with a piece of broken crockery, and then to cover it with ashes?

There is not a trade, industry, or profession, except the priestly profession, that can make any use of the Bible. It is true that it says in Genesis that God planted a garden and made all the trees grow therein that are pleasant to the sight or good for food, but he turned off his gardener before the end of the first season, and horticulturalists can derive no benefit from the experiment of Eden, as God has left no work telling the world what he knows about gardening. But to theologians and priests the Bible is a bonanza. It is good authority on any subject that man knows nothing about and that has no relation to human life. It should be called the encyclopædia of useless information. It should be advertised as a book containing the lives of people who never lived, and the words of people who never spoke. If the stories it contains were reliable, they would only show how much worse men were two thousand years ago than they are to-day. Some of its heroes are fit to figure in the "Pirates' Own Book," and Jonah might be called the Sinbad of religion.

Let us look at the natural history of the Bible. There certainly were more things on earth and in the heavens in the days of old, than any scientist ever dreamed of, if we can credit the Christian Scriptures. The "lost arts" of human civilization are to be regretted, but the lost wonders of the animal and vegetable kingdoms that have perished from the earth fill us with lamentations. No geologist has ever been able to find the rock of ages. No astronomer has seen with his glass the light from the star of Bethlehem, and no nose has smelt the rose of Sharon. Every autumn the woods are aflame with all the wonders of color, but we search in vain to find a bush that could be burned with fire and not consumed. We have the cane and the birch, but the tree that sweetened the waters of Marah is extinct. The earth's surface is covered with rocks of every size and shape, but man would strike them with a rod in vain, expecting to see the glory of Horeb repeated and a boulder change to a crystal fountain. The seas have been dragged with line and net, the fish have been pursued with lance and harpoon, and the ocean has yielded to man her monsters, but no fish has been caught with internal apartments fitted up for a three days' residence for man. We have the animal that Balaam rode, but no one has ever heard from his mouth anything but the natural melody of the beast. There are serpents and snakes that crawl upon the ground, but they never astonish us by their knowledge of any human language, and the serpent that whispers in the ear of woman to-day does not do so to tell her the truth. We have mammoth vines that grow from the soil, but no Jonah's gourd has ever been on exhibition at our agricultural fairs. The forests and orchards have trees without number, but no arborist has ever discovered the tree of knowledge or the tree of life. Men buy walking-sticks to-day, but the wood that could change into a snake is no longer made into canes. We

can see a flock of pigeons almost any day flying over our heads, but we cannot see any feathered Holy Ghost among them.

Rich as is the Bible in natural history, and replete with wonderful things, it would be wanting without John's Revelation. This mad poem takes the lead among the "curiosities of literature." When John is mounted and under way, he has more resemblance to a hunter of strange beasts than to Bellerophon. His Pegasus has feet instead of wings, and he kicks up the dust of earth in his course rather than strikes the golden pavement of heaven. The book of Revelation is a menagerie. Every chapter is a cage of beasts, the like of which man never saw in his sober moments. It makes one's hair stand on end to look over the list of animals in the collection. Beasts with six wings and full of eyes; beasts with human faces, and beasts like flying eagles, besides the beast that "ascendeth out of the bottomless pit," and the one that rose out of the sea, and the great dragon and all his angels. But these creatures are not the most wonderful that this pious Barnum has collected. In cage number twelve, or in the twelfth chapter of Revelation, we find a "woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars," and in the same cage is a "red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his head." In speaking of this wonderful dragon, the showman informs us that "his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth."

John has also in his collection the "Lamb of life," the Lamb that had seven horns and seven eyes; the "Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory and blessing"; the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and the "Lamb which taketh away the sins of man." We read in the last chapter of the Bible these

words: — "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." There certainly is enough in the book, and the man who would attempt to add any more to the Bible like Revelation, would deserve to suffer all the plagues mentioned in the volume.

It is a falsehood in the mouth of man for him to longer call the Bible the word of God. I say this because it is the truth, because I would be wronging the world if I did not say it. We are not dependent upon this book for our science, our philosophy, or our morality. A dozen better volumes could be compiled from our literature. What is of any real value to the world in the Bible could be printed in a single number of the **Boston INVESTIGATOR**.

The moral importance of this so-called word of God has been exaggerated. Do you not think that you would live just as good a life if you never read Paul's epistle to the Hebrews? Do you imagine that you love your wife or your child with a holier affection for knowing how many Philistines fell by the hand of David? Does it make it easier to live, to believe the story of Jonah? A great many people have Bible on the brain. They prescribe this volume as a cure for every vice and every wrong. The people who regard the Bible with most veneration are those who have the least understanding of it.

Liberals must deny this book the place in their homes which Christians assign it. It should be our endeavor to keep it out of the hands of children. We must work to drive it into disuse as a text-book of morality and religion. We must ridicule the ridiculous; expose the false, and condemn the vile in this book, until the world demands that the church shall no longer teach that the Bible is the word of God.

THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

A LECTURE

**DELIVERED BEFORE THE NEW ENGLAND FREETHINKERS'
CONVENTION, IN PAINE HALL, BOSTON,
JAN. 29, 1887.**

BY L. K. WASHBURN.

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The Bank of Wisdom publishes all works of human interest, we scorn no ideas of serious thought. Ideas and beliefs some may think “dangerous” and would hide, we seek to reproduce and distribute for the consideration and intellectual development of every human mind. When peace and understanding is established throughout the world it might be said that humanity has achieved an acceptable degree of civilization, but until that longed for time we must never cease to search for greater truth and a higher morality for humanity.

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THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

It is now nearly fifty years since the first protest was made by the Catholic Church against our public schools. That protest was made in behalf of the Catholic conscience. It was claimed that our public school system was oppressive to the Catholic; that it was calculated to influence the mind in the direction of Protestant doctrines, and that it was unjust to those citizens of the United States who did not wish the minds of their children biased by the teachings of Protestantism. The reading of the Bible and the repetition of the Lord's prayer, as it is called, either by the teacher alone or by the teacher and school together, furnished the ground for the protest by the Catholic Church.

That there was some reason for the action of the Catholic Church we do not deny. It is manifestly unjust, not only to the Catholic citizen, but also to the Jew, the Agnostic, and the so-called Infidel, to have such religious exercises conducted in our public schools. The only right and just basis for our schools to stand upon is a secular basis. The State should not endorse any religion, nor allow any religion to be taught in the public schools, nor imply, by the acts of any of its officials, any religious faith whatsoever. Any endorsement of one or another form of religion by the State is an unjust discrimination against the rights and privileges of all those citizens who do not embrace that particular religion. We oppose the reading of the Bible in the schools for the same reason that we would oppose the

reading of the Koran or the Book of Mormon, — that it is a recognition of a special religious faith, and directly antagonistic to the principles of our Government.

We must take the protest of Catholicism against our public schools for what it is worth, and for what it means. This is to be determined by the attitude of the Catholic Church towards our schools, and by its own educational system, which is fostered by the policy of Catholicism and commanded by the head of the church. We may as well leave the conscience of the Catholic citizen out of the question, and consider simply the objects and interests of the Catholic Church, as it is evident to the impartial mind that these are the real objectors to our school system.

The charge has been made that our public schools are immoral, and this charge has been iterated and reiterated by priest and bishop for almost half a century. It is not claimed that immorality is openly taught in our schools, but that the system of instruction adopted in our schools is calculated to lead to immorality. The implication is this, that as the public schools are not under the supervision of the Catholic Church, (which is the only infallible teacher of morals,) they are teaching contrary to its principles, and consequently inculcating immoral doctrines. How far the arrogant assumption of this priestly power is to be seriously considered, must be determined by its action. We cannot be blind to the fact that there is a well-matured plan of attack upon our public school system being carried into operation throughout the United States, and that there is an object in this attack which is not expressed in its criticism of the character of our schools.

The whole truth may as well be stated as a part of the truth. The Roman Church, in its assault upon the public schools, aims to destroy our present school system, and to secure a portion of the school funds to aid in building up its own power by controlling the education of the children of Catholic parents. This is the manifest purpose of the Catholic priesthood in their systematic opposition to the common schools. For a course like this there is obviously some reason. We have not far to go to find this reason. The purpose of the Roman Church in opposing the public schools is inspired through fear of the education obtained in these schools.

The criticism of Catholicism upon the educational institutions of the United States is dictated by ecclesiastical interests. The policy of the Catholic Church is to destroy everything it cannot feed upon.

The common schools are the friends of liberty and the foes of tyranny. They impart knowledge, which is death to superstition, and hence to the Catholic power, for every church of the Roman faith is built of the bricks of ignorance, laid in the mortar of superstition. The intelligence, the progress, and the happiness of the American people are identified with our common schools. Not erroneously is our school system regarded as the noblest and most important of the institutions of the land. School-houses are the churches of liberty. They are the light-houses of progress, the fortresses of patriotism, the training schools of citizenship, and the bulwarks of a free government.

Whatever or whoever opposes our public schools is the enemy of the country and of the country's liberty, the foe of education and enlightenment, and is inimical to the best interests of the people. The Catholic Church, by its deliberate and determined stand against the public schools, must take the logical position of its opinions, and declare itself the assailant of republican institutions. The sooner the American people awake to the fact that this Church is using the means of political liberty to promote ecclesiastical tyranny, the sooner will the nation apply those remedies of safety which are necessary to protect and perpetuate the rights of citizens and the liberties of the country.

The signal of danger which the protest of the Roman Church has hoisted to the skies should not be disregarded. It is the finger of warning pointing out the duty of every American citizen. It tells us that there is a storm gathering, — that there are foes in our midst. The power of the people has been challenged by the representatives of ecclesiasticism, and the Church defies the nation.

We must not allow ourselves to be deceived as to the nature of the assault that has been made upon our schools. The slander of immorality need not be answered. Such an imputation merely reveals the base methods of that power that is the self-constituted foe of popular education. It is not what is being taught in the schools that the Catholic power protests against. It is not the particular religious teachings in our schools that furnish the real ground of objection against them. There is something deeper and more serious in its protest that we need to understand.

The Catholic Church claims that the State has no right to direct education, that such a duty does not belong to the State, and that the State is not the guardian of the child, and has no moral right to in-

struct it. This is the ground that the Catholic hierarchy stands upon, and only from this standpoint can it presume to offer criticism of our public schools. This is the extraordinary position assumed by the Church, and it certainly is a most audacious assumption, and one which it can defend only to the satisfaction of its own ignorant subjects.

The Church claims that its authority is higher than that of the State, and that it is of vastly more importance to be a submissive member of the Church than it is to be a good citizen of the Republic. It holds itself the one competent authority to settle all matters pertaining to the welfare of mankind, and it has decreed that it is more necessary to have the children of the nation educated in those doctrines that will make obedient Catholics of them, than to have them instructed in those principles which will fit them for a life of usefulness, of happiness, and make them loyal to their country.

In obedience to this decree have sectarian schools been established in nearly every city in the Union; and it is only a question of time when the Catholic Church will ask to have its sectarian schools supported out of the public funds, or else to have Catholic citizens exempted from taxation to the amount necessary to their support. This is the inevitable outcome of such a step, and this is to be the first blow struck at our national life.

Catholicism is a despotic power, and every Catholic is a tool of this power. The Church has only to command to be obeyed. It enforces its policy by threats, which, to the devout believers, are more to be feared than the pains and penalties inflicted upon the criminal by the State. Its immense power over the superstitious mind is wielded with remorseless unconcern. It keeps its eye upon the end in view, and hesitates at no act which policy dictates or success demands. Its victims are simply foolish individuals who were not wise enough to escape their fate, or sacrifices on the altar of religion.

The Catholic Church has, within the past twenty years, increased in the United States at an astonishing rate, and has collected from its vast horde of devotees millions upon millions of dollars, which have been built into churches, convents, and school buildings without number. It is asserted upon good authority that there are to-day 8,000,000 Romanists in this country, and that the bishops of the Catholic Church hold in trust property valued at \$2,000,000,000, all of which is exempted from taxation.

Understand that this vast army of believers, at the command of the

Pope, will act as one man, and you can see what a power for evil is this hierarchy, which, in every age and every land, has sold its influence for gain, and bartered its support for power.

The Catholic Church wants but one kind of education—that which will make Catholics. It is only necessary to refer to Catholic authorities to prove this statement. All the acts of the Roman Church for the past forty years, in the United States, substantiate this assertion. The kind of education that will make Catholics can be had only in schools where particular emphasis can be given to the doctrines of the Catholic Church, where the teachers are Catholics, and where the power of the priest is recognized as higher than that of the State. This fact was seen, and as soon as the Church became strong enough financially, it commenced to plant such schools.

While there had been for years an attempt on the part of the Roman Church to overthrow the common schools, it was not until the year 1864 that Pope Pius IX. openly avowed the Catholic determination, and outlined the policy to be pursued towards the schools. The approval of the education of children in a "knowledge of natural things" and "to the ends of social life on this earth," apart from "the Catholic faith and from the power of the church," was declared by Pius IX. "a damnable heresy." The head of the Church forbids all Catholics to approve any but a Catholic education; and when a priest makes war upon the public schools, as did Archbishop Hughes in 1840, and Bishop McQuaid in 1876, he does so in pursuance of the policy of his Church, and in obedience to the order of the Pope.

We may declare, without fear of contradiction, that the Catholic Church has arrayed itself in opposition to the common schools, and that it has assumed this position as necessary to the continuance and prosperity of its ecclesiastical organization. The proclamation of the Vatican, that all instruction save that received at the hands of the Church is to be condemned, is echoed in every Catholic Church in America. The cry that our schools are "Godless" has been heard from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The whip of the priest has been snapped over the head of the recalcitrant layman who rebelled against the Church's command to "believe and obey." Persecution as well as condemnation has been employed to enforce the edict of the Pope. It is the right, under the laws of the country, for the Catholic to establish and maintain parochial schools, and teach the doctrines of his Church therein; but when these schools are used for the purpose of making war upon the

public school system, it is then the right and duty of every American citizen to protest against such procedure, and warn the Church against the consequences of pursuing such a course.

We want no church that is afraid of the truth, and no institution that is afraid of liberty. No man who has a sincere love of this Republic in his heart, who has a sincere desire to see it prosper and advance in the ways of civilization and peace, who has faith in a free government, can look but with suspicion upon the Catholic Church in America. It has too bad a record in other countries to recommend it to favor in this. Its history does not show that it seeks to educate the people, but to rule and oppress them. I need not point beyond Spain and Italy, of the present century, to convince any one but a Catholic that the Roman Church is the foe of education, and not the friend; that it prefers power to truth, and seeks indulgence for the few rather than justice and happiness for the many. When Victor Emanuel took Rome from the hands of the Papal troops, what a darkness of ignorance was found in the holy city! Five per cent. only of the population could read and write, and of what is termed education there was found among the Catholics scarcely a sign. Can parents, who desire to have their children educated, trust them to a Church that allowed ninety-five per cent. of her subjects to live without knowing how to read and write, and this, too, in the city of Rome, the home and representative of the Church, the capital city of her religion?

This fact is sufficient to show how much education Romanism considers good for its subjects. It reminds me of the man who recommended mixing sawdust with meal for horse-feed, for those who desired something cheaper than the ordinary article. When asked what proportion of sawdust should be mixed with the meal, he replied, "Less the better — for the horse." That is the proportion of education that the Catholic Church wants mixed with its superstitions, "Less the better" — *for the Church*. America, under her free schools, and Italy, under the Pope, show the difference in their respective educational systems. Catholicism, past and present, is a sufficient answer to the boast of Rome that she is the friend of enlightenment.

In Spain, Mexico, and Canada, the Catholic Church has not been in favor of popular education, and the people in these countries are to-day sunk in superstition and illiteracy. Catholicism has less to fear where the children do not go to school at all, than where they

attend the common schools; and that Catholic priests do not threaten with excommunication, or with the refusal of the sacraments of the Church, the parents who do not send their children to any school, shows that the Catholic Church chooses ignorance rather than education, and darkness rather than light.

It is a suggestive fact, that Catholicism flourishes best where there is least knowledge, and that wherever the mind is free, and education encouraged, it cannot maintain its hold upon the mind. When we contemplate this religion that can live only upon ignorance, and that can spread its doctrines only by absolute control of the intellect, we see the attitude of Catholicism towards our institutions, and the purpose of this priestly power in our free country. A religion that runs to churches and convents is not the friend of man.

The richer the Church, the poorer the home. The more priests, the more the poor have got to rob their families to support them. The more it costs to worship God, the less there is to help man. The Catholic is not a product of this country. He is a thousand years behind the times. He belongs to an age without science, without philosophy, without education, without self-reliance; an age when mental darkness covered the earth, when fear made man a coward, and ignorance made him a slave; an age when vice and crime were holy, and virtue and manhood vile; an age when civilization was asleep, and liberty was dead; an age when a monk was a hero, and when a nun was a saint; an age when a man was a beast, and a priest was a God. The Catholic is no more in sympathy with the progress and enlightenment of our times than is a Hottentot. He knows only what the priest lets him know, and the Catholics of the world are only so many arms and legs of the Church.

The Catholic religion is, on the part of the priest, to control the people; and, on the part of the people, to obey the priests. The religion of Rome is summed up in two words — command and obey. The Catholic Church recognizes no right of private judgment, no free thinking. The priest holds in his hands the fate of the Catholic, and he can send him to heaven or to hell. He can drive him as his horse, or kick him as his dog. A more contemptible object does not exist on the earth than the stupid, craven subject of Rome, nor a more pitiable one. Denied the right to be a man, forbidden to think, to feel, to act contrary to the command of a master; obliged to be a parent, yet surrender the guidance of his offspring to others; forced to labor like a slave, only to see others live upon the fruits of his

labor, a citizen of every nation, yet always a subject of one merciless tyrant, — this is the Catholic in all ages, in all lands, under all conditions of civilization. Here is what the Catholic Church says:—

“We have to believe only what the Pope and the bishop teach. The freedom of thinking is simply nonsense. We are no more free to think without rule than we are to act without one.”

And the Church furnishes both rules, and it is hardly necessary to say that thinking and acting on the part of the Catholics are only machine performances, with no intelligent comprehension *why* he should thus think and act. To prevent all education but what the Church gives, is the purpose of the Catholic power.

In 1869, Archbishop Purcell said:—“We as Catholics cannot approve of that system of education for youth which is apart from instruction in the Catholic faith and the teaching of the Church.”

In 1873, Bishop Gilmour, of Cleveland, Ohio, said:—

“If we are Catholics we must leave after us a Catholic youth. And experience has clearly proved this cannot be done, unless the children are early taught, and daily taught, that they are Catholics. We must not sleep while our enemies are working. Nor must we forget that the public schools are organized and managed for and in the interests of Protestantism. We solemnly charge, and most positively require, every Catholic in the diocese to support, and send his children to a Catholic school. When good Catholic schools exist, and where it may be honestly said a child will get a fair, common-school education, if parents, either through contempt for the priest, or disregard for the laws of the Church, or for trifling and insufficient reasons, refuse to send their children to a Catholic school, then in such cases, but in such cases only, we authorize confessors to refuse the sacraments to such parents as thus despise the laws of the Church, and disobey the command of both priest and bishop.”

In 1876, Bishop McQuaid said, in a lecture delivered in this city [Boston]:—

“The Catholic Christian, taught to hear the Church which is commissioned to teach all divine truths with infallible certainty, learns that he cannot neglect the care and education of his children without grievous sin; that their religious instruction demands his chief thought; and that to expose them to danger in faith or morals, in schools or elsewhere, would bring on him the just anger of God, and punishment hereafter. He knows that an education which excludes God, and is confined to material thoughts and interests, is one which

for his children he cannot approve." "The Catholic is unwilling to transfer the responsibility of the education of his children to the State. His conscience informs him that the State is an incompetent agent to fulfil his parental duties."

These quotations sufficiently indicate what we have declared to be the policy of the Catholic Church, to have her children educated with one end in view, that of making them good Catholics. The power of Rome is not, and never has been, concerned about the happiness or prosperity of mankind.

It has steadily worked for one object, and that object is independent of the material conditions of humanity. The movements for better social surroundings, for larger individual rights, have never enlisted the sympathies of the Romish Church. The Catholic hierarchy is interested in no reform that does not bear upon its own success. The priest who joins the people in their struggle against any form of tyranny, is a traitor to his Church — the ally of every tyranny that has cursed the earth. There could not be devised a better way to form and fit the mind for the exercise of human rights than is found in our democratic public schools. They are under no fixed creed of instruction, but take their character from the wants of the age.

They are not designed to teach theology or religion. Their object is to impart instruction in those branches of knowledge which apply to the general needs of life, in science, literature, and the rules of language. Inasmuch as any religious practice or doctrine is inculcated or endorsed in the public schools, the spirit of our school system is violated.

While I do not regard the Catholic objection to reading the Bible in the schools as anything more than a sacerdotal pretext for raising a cry against them, still it is unfortunate that there should have been this peg on which Catholicism could hang its complaint. It is the craft of the priest, and not the conscience of the people, that protests against the character of our public schools. Under all the condemnation of our school system by the Catholic hierarchy is fear of education itself, and for the natural reason that the educated man or woman would laugh at the threats of a priest. Every sensible person knows that the anathema of the Pope is a blank cartridge. The trade-mark of Catholicism should be, the skull and cross-bones, and every word it utters should be marked "*Poison.*"

Of all the roads to heaven that Christianity has built, the Catholic

road is in the dirtiest condition. It seems to be best fitted for what the Irish woman called her pig, "a heavenly baste." Ignorance is the direct way to the Catholic paradise. The less you know, the more you can believe; and the more you can believe, the more you can be humbugged by the priest; and the more you can be humbugged, the better Catholic you become. To know the catechism and pay the priest is knowledge and virtue in the eyes of Rome. To know any more than this, or to refuse to do less, is to be "godless" and "immoral" according to Catholicism.

We believe that there is to be attempted in this country, by the Catholic power, a suppression of all education worth the name. We believe so, because this has been done in every land where this power has controlled the people. In Spain, up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, not one person in fifty attended school. It was almost impossible to find a workingman who could read, and a woman with such an accomplishment would have been looked upon as immoral. Up to 1870, not one in twenty attended school; and out of the entire population of nearly seventeen millions, not over three millions could read or write. So much for Spain.

In Portugal, where the Catholic religion is sustained by the State, the children are taught little besides the catechism. Italy, down to the year 1860, was the ideal country of the Catholic Church. There was no education among the people. Ignorance and superstition, the pillars of the Romish Church, were national. A more degraded population could not be found. And this was the fruit of Catholicism. This was the result of Catholic schools. This is a record to be proud of! Only five per cent. of the whole people could read or write. The work of the Catholic hierarchy was more perfectly carried out in Italy than anywhere else.

Let us look back at our own State. The number of adults who are unable to read and write, in Massachusetts, is about one hundred thousand. Of this number, nine-tenths are of foreign birth. It is unnecessary to give facts or figures to prove that the Catholic Church is opposed to educating her subjects. Any Catholic congregation is proof sufficient.

Education means progress, liberty, reform, and free institutions. It means modern civilization, free thought, free speech, and free souls. It means morality, rectitude, justice. It means comfortable homes, rational enjoyments, fireside virtues. It means all that this age stands for that is pure and good. It means independence, development,

righteousness, and republican principles. Ignorance means slavery, corruption, degradation, Roman Catholicism, and tyranny.

It is more important to preserve freedom to this land than it is to give existence to any religious organization, and America is what our fathers fought for one hundred years ago, instead of the Catholic Church. It was to secure independence from religious oppression that the Pilgrims left their native land and came to these shores. It was to found a nation where the State could not oppress the body, nor the church oppress the conscience, that the Revolutionary patriots fought and died. It was to warn the American colonists of the evils of tyranny that Thomas Paine wrote his "Common Sense." Catholicism stands for everything that the Puritans fled from, for everything that Paine wrote against, for everything that the Revolutionary army fought against, for everything that free thought and free speech are battling against to-day, and it represents what progress is trying to overthrow, what reform is endeavoring to destroy, what liberty is working to defeat, and what free institutions were formed to resist and conquer.

We are not to debate the question whether Catholicism shall be allowed to set up and propagate her effete ideas in this land of freedom. The evil is here, and the question is, What shall we do with it? The Catholic hierarchy has doubtless been considering what it should do with us; but that question is rather premature. When the tail wags the dog instead of the dog wagging the tail, it will be time enough for eight million Catholic subjects to ask what it shall do with forty-five million free men and women. I would keep the mind free from religious prejudice, and guard against saying one unjust word of any form of religious faith; but Catholicism has made itself obnoxious by scorning the principles upon which our Government was founded, and by which it is administered to-day.

There is one remedy for the evils of Papacy, and that is education. Give the children of Catholic parents a good common school education, and neither priest, bishop, nor Pope would dare interfere with the rights of parents. Has it never occurred to this Church, that insists so strenuously for parental prerogatives, that such prerogatives may be exercised in refusing obedience to the Church with as much justice as in yielding to its demands? The parent who exercises his natural right, and sends his children to the public school, is branded by the priest as a heretic, and refused the sacraments of the Church. Does not this show us that what the Catholic hierarchy wants is for

the parent to surrender his parental prerogatives to the priest, and submit to his guidance and direction? Was there ever a more bare-faced piece of sophistry than this pious pretence of the Catholic Church that the State, by its laws, interferes with the rights of parents? It is the Church that interferes with the rights of the children.

This is the point for us to emphasize. Every child born into this world, ought to receive as good an education as can be afforded by our schools. The perpetuation of our free institutions depends upon an intelligent understanding and appreciation of these institutions, and to this end education should be compulsory upon all children alike. It is admitted by Catholic authorities that but for the influence of the public school upon the mind of the Catholic youth the number of Catholic communicants would be larger by two or three millions than it is. Recent instances have shown the people that Catholics in many parts of the country do not submit tamely and without protest to the spiritual domination of the priesthood.

Such signs presage an open resistance and rebellion at no distant day. The common schools have influenced the minds of Catholics, and there is growing in the church a power which in the future may rend it in twain. The American idea is being imbibed by the Catholic children, and the mighty persuasion of character is exerting an influence towards a broader mental freedom.

Catholicism as a system of religious doctrines and practices, is ridiculous in the eyes of educated Americans. It is looked upon as no better than the foolish worship of the heathen, while the assumption of power by its priests to decide the fate of men hereafter is, in the language of one of our daily papers, "as funny as anything of Mark Twain's." Because the Catholic Church has been tolerated in this country it must not for this reason presume that there is any reverence for it or fear of it. It did not come here by invitation of the American people, nor did Congress beg the Pope to let it come. It came here the same as everybody else came, to better itself. It has never helped the nation, and if it were to pack its trunk and go away to-morrow it would leave no mourners behind.

The very instincts of a free people are opposed to everything of a Roman Catholic color, and the existence of the Catholic Church under our Republican Government I regard as the greatest political phenomenon of any age. Reverse the order of things, and think you that a Catholic Government would exhibit like political toleration?

When has this ecclesiastical power allowed religious liberty? The whole structure of Catholicism rests upon the assumption that it is a sin to believe contrary to the teachings of the church, and for fear that the sinner might escape punishment hereafter it has taken good care to give it to him here.

I could pronounce no benediction upon Romanism. It has done mischief enough to deserve transportation for life. I regard Roman Christianity as the worst form of tyranny. It commands the arm to work and the brain to die; it feeds faith and starves thought; it loves oppression and hates liberty. It has given falsehood a crown and truth a scaffold. This world would be a better, brighter, and safer place for man to live if the whole power of Catholicism was in some other world.

I have nothing to say against the men and women as individuals who are Catholics, nothing against the Irish. I am not a Know-nothing. I have no race-prejudice, no national hatred, but I love liberty too well to respect a church that stands for tyranny. I have too much faith in free institutions to endorse the methods of Catholic priesthood.

As long as I have a voice to speak it shall be raised for political and religious freedom, and against political and religious oppression.

Let the Catholic Church beware how it tramples upon the rights of the citizens of this nation. There is a point beyond which toleration ceases to be a duty.

PROTESTANT MENACE
TO
OUR GOVERNMENT.

A LECTURE

**DELIVERED IN INVESTIGATOR HALL, BOSTON, BEFORE
THE INGERSOLL SECULAR SOCIETY,
SUNDAY, JAN. 27, 1889,**

BY L. K. WASHBURN.

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If every American does his or her best for America and for Humanity we shall become, and remain, the Grandest of Nations – admired by all and feared by none, our strength being our Wisdom and kindness.

Knowledge knows no race, sex, boundary or nationality; what mankind knows has been gathered from every field plowed by the thoughts of man. There is no reason to envy a learned person or a scholarly institution, learning is available to all who seek it in earnest, and it is to be had cheaply enough for all.

To study and plow deeper the rut one is in does not lead to an elevation of intelligence, quite the contrary! To read widely, savor the thoughts, and blind beliefs, of others will make it impossible to return again to that narrowness that did dominate the view of the uninformed.

To prove a thing wrong that had been believed will elevate the mind more than a new fact learned.

Emmett F. Fields
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PROTESTANT MENACE .
TO
OUR GOVERNMENT.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN :—

It is essential that we understand what our Government stands for; that we recognize the principles upon which it was founded and the purposes for which it exists, in order to realize the present anomalous condition of things, and to see the contradiction between theory and practice as illustrated in the actual affairs of our national life. It seems like repeating the familiar knowledge of the school-room to say that our Government stands for human rights; that chief among these rights is liberty, and that the very inspiration of our existence as a people was the demand for political freedom.

The purposes of our Government is identical with its principles, *to secure to man the freedom which it declares to be his right.* Our Constitution guarantees the citizen of this nation the blessings of "liberty," and our Government should make good its word.

Our nation was born in a land which had passed through a religious experience that embraced persecution and toleration, fanaticism and common sense. The narrow religious spirit of the Puritan broadened into the philosophic temper of Franklin, and the rational faith of Jefferson and Paine. The events that immediately preceded the struggle for independence on this Continent which commanded the attention of the inhabitants of the Colonies, were of a political character. Whatever there was of religious or ecclesiastical interest was either pushed aside or forgotten in the more important matters of political Government.

The King of Great Britain had oppressed beyond endurance his American subjects, and the indignation of the Colonists was ripening into rebellion. The question that appealed to every heart was one of human rights. The heel of tyranny was on the necks of the people, and their sufferings had passed the bounds of submission. Let us understand that among all the alleged grievances against the King by the Colonists, there was no religious oppression complained of. Among the causes assigned for separation by the American people, there was no mention of religious wrongs or religious injustice. The step taken by the Colonists then was not to secure any religious reform, but solely to secure a better political Government.

These are the facts: The question of political independence from Great Britain was discussed with little or no reference to religious institutions; the war of the Revolution was fought with the one

idea of political independence as the objective point of the struggle; the celebration of the victory which the American army achieved was a rejoicing over the political independence which the Colonies had won. Our Government was established for no religious purpose. It is well for this fact to be emphasized at the present time.

The founders of our Republic, whatever their individual religious convictions or opinions might have been, imposed no religion upon the nation. The State was to recognize no church, but to allow equal religious liberty to all. This principle was affirmed in the strongest language in the National Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." We may rest assured, however, that those most interested in ecclesiastical matters were not indifferent to the fate of religion, but the vast importance of political success overshadowed and kept in abeyance any sectarian or religious ambition which might seek gratification. Perhaps another reason that the assertion of religious liberty was engrafted on the Constitution, was, that many of the leaders in the struggle for independence were Freethinkers. Men who had become emancipated from superstition, and who were familiar with the history of ecclesiastical persecution, would not willingly see a new-born nation committed to hands that cared more for the interests of a church than for the rights of man.

It was fortunate for the human race that the foremost minds which gave form and direction to our Government were not religious bigots or fanatics. On no other Continent, and at no other period in the history of mankind, had there existed circumstances so favorable to the triumph of human freedom. Liberty was in the air. It fell to the people as a natural right. If there was manifested any disposition to shut it out of the National Constitution, it did not succeed. There were men who had thought deeply, who were determined that no union of Church and State should be permitted in this country. We have in the United States no established religion, no national church. The letter of the Constitution has not been violated. Congress has made no law prohibiting religious freedom. For over one hundred years the American people have boasted that in this land there was no union of Church and State.

In theory we have religious liberty in the United States, but in fact we have not. While there has been no legislative act that commits the nation to any form of religion, our Government has kept up a sort of religious flirtation with Christianity ever since its foundation, and has shown it favors and granted it immunities which cannot be reconciled with its principles of Secularism. If our nation has no religious intentions, every act which relieves the Christian Church of a just burden is dishonorable and unfair to those who do not wish to help support this ecclesiastical parasite.

It is said that our Government has never declared

itself in favor of any religion, and yet ecclesiastical property has been exempted from taxation; ministers have been paid for praying by State and Nation; money has been granted by City and State for sectarian purposes; the Bible has been read in our public schools; the Governors of our States, and the President of the United States, have appointed days of fasting and prayer, and commanded the people to pay them the respect of religious observance, and various laws, having for their object the control of Sunday in the interest of Christianity, have been enacted and enforced in nearly all the States and Territories of the United States of America. We have an illegitimate union of Church and State in this country, and it is time that it was broken up. In the face of such facts as we have mentioned, the Constitution which declares that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, needs to be vindicated.

The National Constitution guarantees religious liberty to every citizen, and gives every State in the Union the power to take away this liberty. As a citizen of the United States, I am not bound by any religion, but as a citizen of Massachusetts I am compelled to regulate my actions by the faith of Christianity. Every State can make, and has made, laws abridging religious liberty. Such laws to-day give the Christian Church the legal right to take away human freedom, but every such statute is contrary to the supreme law of the land, and should be abrogated. It is time to cry "Halt!" to the religious power in this country. The march of

events under the flag of freedom takes us into no ecclesiastical camp. We must decide which is of most value to our people, the Christian religion or the principles embodied in our National Constitution; the Protestant Church or a free Government. This question is being forced upon our attention, and is up for discussion.

I insist that while every religion is free to propagate its faith by all the ecclesiastical arts known to priest and minister, no church has the right to claim the power of the law to shield it from just criticism, or to enforce its faith upon the people. Our nation is not a Christian nation. All the legislation in the interest of the Christian Church is contrary to the declaration of our principles. Every statute that has for its object the enforcement of the Christian religion is religious oppression. I always try to think as well of my fellow beings as I can. I would like to do justice to those men and women who are trying to have our Government "stand up for Jesus"; and I will admit that they are sincere in their efforts, that they honestly believe that we should be better, more moral and upright as a people, if some acknowledgment of our national dependence upon the Protestant religion could be secured from our Government. I will also admit that Calvin was perfectly sincere in his belief that the doctrines of Servetus were dangerous to the soul of man, and that in his approval of the burning of Servetus he was perfectly sincere.

I will admit that the Massachusetts Puritans

who hung Quakers on Boston Common were sincere in their cruel and barbarous persecutions, and that it was with all sincerity that they branded with hot irons people whom they looked upon as heretics. I will admit that the Christian prosecution of Abner Kneeland for blasphemy was sincere, and that this grand man, called "the grey father of American Free Thought," was sent to jail for an honest expression of an honest faith in perfect sincerity. I will admit that the Unitarians were sincere in their fear and hate of Theodore Parker, when he was a living power in this city, and that sincerity dictated the tardy repentance which has moved the Unitarian denomination to pay him the tribute of respect and honor which it has but lately laid upon the brow crowned with death. I will admit that all Christians are sincere in their hatred of Freethinkers, and that the Christian Church hates most sincerely that most-hated Freethinker whom we to-day have met to honor—THOMAS PAINE.

Sincerity has been the excuse of one-half the villany of the world, and the apology of the other half. It has been the fair face of too many foul deeds. Thousands of crimes and wrongs and cruelties have been born from the heart of this word. We cannot deny sincerity to the Moham-medan in his fiendish barbarities to Christians, nor equal sincerity to Christians in their equally barbarous retaliation. We feel that the dupe of religious excitement is sincere in whatever he says and does, but we cannot for this reason endorse his

flaming rhetoric, or imitate his pious gymnastics. I presume that every bigot and every fanatic in the world is sincere.

Let us ask the Protestant Christians of the United States, who are working to get their religion endorsed by the Government, if they are suffering from political injustice, if they are victims of political wrongs? Are they singled out among the inhabitants of this country for legislative afflictions? Are they compelled to observe against their convictions any particular day of the week as sacred above another? Is their property taxed unjustly; taxed to support a worship which they cannot join and a religion which they cannot accept? Are their children compelled by the laws of the State to listen to the reading of religious books which are obnoxious to them? Do they hear prayers in our legislatures that are offensive to their ideas of right?

The necessary and just demand is not for the Government to give further aid to the Protestant Church, but to stop the immunities which this church now enjoys. In view of the many wrongs and evils which others have to bear on account of the privileges granted to this church, every Christian should hang his head in shame and blush with guilt before the American people. The truth is this: The Protestant churches of the United States want to control our Government for the advantage of their religion. They already have secured enactments in all of our legislatures which give them power to injure in mind and estate those who do not accept the Christian faith. Yet in face of this

fact, and in face of the National Constitution, which says that Congress shall not prohibit the free exercise of religion, there is a movement among the Protestant party for greater ecclesiastical authority.

We cannot be blind to the efforts being made by Christian fanatics, nor can we see such attempts to weaken our political Government and strangle our political liberty without a protest. That the people who are seeking for religious power in this country are honest and sincere in their endeavors, is not any reason why our citizens should stand idly by and see their political institutions overthrown, and the freedom won by the patriots of the Revolution destroyed by the bigots of the Christian Church.

The Protestant menace to our Government is much too serious to be dismissed with the self-satisfying assurance that there is no danger in this land from the ecclesiastical power. There is a more imminent danger than most people are aware of, and there is apprehension lest it be seen too late. The Christian Church, to hide its base motives, is proclaiming that the increasing scepticism in this country threatens the moral foundation of society, and that its further spread endangers the very existence of our Republic. It is seeking to create a sentiment against the spirit of free inquiry, which has challenged its authority and exposed its false claims to Divine guidance. The endeavor to foist its religion upon the nation is for the purpose of getting the power to stamp out Liberalism in the United States.

Upon any true and faithful representation of the work of Free Thought in the world, the Christian Church would be unable to arouse any prejudice against it. It is only by raising the cry of "Infidelity" that it can succeed. The word "Infidel" is "mad dog" to the ear of the average Christian. Start this cry and he at once arms himself with the cudgel of slander and abuse, and is ready to engage in any crusade that promises the speedy extermination of his enemy. But we do not purpose to allow Liberalism to be misrepresented by Christian lips without demanding satisfaction.

Liberalism is the honest result of honest thought. It is the expression of honest convictions. As Liberals who have outgrown the influence of the Christian dogmas upon the mind, we take the position that such growth assigns us. We are outside of the Christian Church because we do not belong inside. In our criticisms of the Christian superstitions we have performed what we believed to be a duty. We hold that Christianity as a religious system is both false and wrong, and that we do the world a benefit by exposing its falseness and errors. Liberalism has never lifted a hand in persecution, never imprisoned science or burned doubt. Liberalism has sided with the wronged, the oppressed, the enslaved everywhere. Liberalism has been heroic in its devotion to truth, sublime in its endurance of wrongs, and self-sacrificing in its pursuit of what is right and best for man. And yet the Christian Church has ever treated those who have rejected its faith as enemies of all that is pure, good, and true.

Christianity has persecuted men in all ages ; it has tortured doubt, burned unbelief, and led science and truth to the stake and the gallows. It has sided with the oppressor, with the slaveholder, with the great and powerful everywhere. It has pursued liberty with the hate of a tyrant and the venom of a priest. It has treated knowledge as a spy and truth as a traitor. It has made vice a virtue by putting a premium on a profession of faith, and virtue a vice by punishing the publication of an honest doubt. And yet this priestly piety has the audacity to pose as the friend of science, of knowledge, of truth, of liberty, and of man.

The Protestant Church asks our Government to give it the right to teach its dogmas to our children, when there is not a Christian minister on the earth that can defend these dogmas before the court of common sense. The Protestant Church asks our Government to compel the people to observe the Christian Sabbath as a day of religious worship, when it knows that not one-fourth of the people of the nation look upon Sunday as any holier than Friday.

The truth is that Orthodoxy is regarded as a theological comedy by the intelligence of the world, and as being played chiefly for the benefit of the "actors' fund." It has been apparent for several years that Christianity was losing its hold upon the faith of mankind, and those who get their living out of this superstition have exhausted every physical and mental resource to save Christianity for the purpose of saving themselves. Every device has been resorted to that promised to postpone the dis-

solution of this theological body, and every means tried that held out the faintest hope that this "arrested development" of human thought would yield the salaries of those who preached it for at least another generation.

Various efforts have been made to take away the rights of the people to save the Christian superstitions, but no more flagrant violation of the liberty guaranteed the citizens of this Republic has ever been attempted than is contained in the present endeavor to have Congress pass what is called a National Sabbath Law. Do our people realize what this law means? Do they know what the power of the Protestant Church would be if backed up by the power of our Government? Let me read enough of the text of this proposed law to show how far the Christian Church would go to save its institutions. The bill, which is expected to become a law, was introduced in the Senate of the United States by Mr. Blair, on the 21st of May, 1888. It was read twice, and referred to the Committee on Education and Labor. On December 18th, 1888, it was ordered to be reprinted. This bill is entitled: "A bill to secure to the people the enjoyment of the first day of the week, commonly known as the Lord's Day, as a day of rest, and to promote its observance as a day of religious worship." It reads as follows:—

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,—

That no person, or corporation, or agent, servant, or employee of any person or corporation, shall

perform or authorize to be performed, any secular work, labor, or business to the disturbance of others, works of necessity, and mercy, and humanity excepted; nor shall any person engage in any play, game, or amusement, or recreation to the disturbance of others, on the first day of the week, commonly known as the Lord's Day, or during any part thereof, in any territory, district, vessel, or place subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States.

Sec. 2. That no mails or mail matter shall hereafter be transported in time of peace over any land postal-route, nor shall any mail matter be collected, assorted, handled, or delivered during any part of the first day of the week."

There are certain provisos which are not important to our purpose. Sections 3, 4, and 5 relate to commerce between the States and with the Indian tribes; drills, musters and parades; and the payment and receipt of wages. Sec. 6 refers to such labor and service as are not deemed violations of the act, but says that "the same shall be construed so far as possible to secure to the whole people rest from toil during the first day of the week, their mental and moral culture, and the religious observance of the Sabbath Day."

Here is a deadly blow aimed at religious liberty in this country. Such a bill as this is the attempt of religious despair. Any endeavor to explain it on the ground of public necessity, or in the interest of public morals, is the veriest hypocrisy. Who demands such a law as this bill proposes? What is it demanded for? Have not the people who wish to go to church on Sunday the liberty to do so?

Does any one deny them this right? Does any one object to their going or try to stop them?

Here is the truth: This bill is not to secure to those who wish to observe the Sabbath in a religious manner the right to do so, but it is for the purpose of preventing those who wish to observe it differently from so doing. It is an effort to coerce the conduct and consciences of men. It is compulsion. This act of desperation on the part of the Protestant Christians of the United States is a confession that their religion is a failure, that without the arm of the law to compel people to observe Sunday as a holy day, the church is powerless to secure such observance.

Has no one but a Christian any rights in this country? Is there nothing else of importance in this land but the church? Are the only affairs of great moment those that relate to religion? Has it become necessary for the Government to sanction Christian opinions and observances in order to make the people respect them? Then their usefulness is past; they can only be supported by the oppression of the people. Let Congress pass this National Sabbath Law, and it will soon be asked to pass a law for the endowment of the church and the support of the clergy.

The Protestants of this land are not restrained from teaching their religious dogmas or observing the ceremonies of their religion. Worship is free. A clergyman may teach the most absurd faith, the most ridiculous superstition, and the law protects him. It is not for liberty of conscience that the

Christian Church demands the passage of this Sabbath bill; it is to kill liberty of conscience and take away the rights of the people.

We are informed that a petition, signed by fifteen millions of names, praying for the passage of this bill, has been presented to Congress. What a spectacle in a free country! Has it come to this? Have we forgotten the lessons of persecution that we can wish to re-enact religious tyranny? Has toleration, then, been a failure? Has Christianity taught its adherents no higher justice than to deny to others what they wish to enjoy themselves?

This Sabbath bill is an attempt on the part of Christians to take away the liberty of their neighbors. It is for the purpose of compelling the people to accept their religious opinions, to oblige them to attend church and support Christian worship. This proposed law is a blow at private rights and public blessings. It aims not only to take away the freedom of the individual, its object is to stop public benefactions. The United States mails are to be handled to please Christian ministers. They are to be all locked up Saturday nights and not opened until Monday morning. The railway trains, that carry the mails, are to stop Saturday night wherever they happen to be, when the hand of the clock points on the dial to the hour of twelve, and to remain there twenty-four hours. No letter is to be collected or delivered on Sunday. The only holy service on the so-called Lord's Day is the service conducted by the priest or minister in a Christian Church!

The bill to secure the religious observance of the Sabbath is the measure of Christian intolerance in the nineteenth century. It reveals how much of bigotry and fanaticism there is yet alive. It shows us the spirit that animates the Christian Church, and it shows us moreover the desperate straits to which it is reduced to save its religion. If Christians had founded this Government there would have been no freedom in it. Liberty would have been no larger than the Apostle's creed. We are reminded upon this occasion of those words of Thomas Paine:—"Of all the tyrannies that afflict mankind, tyranny in religion is the worst."

Protestants have yet to learn that liberty of conscience is not the right of a few but of all; that people are not to ask a church what they shall accept as true, or to regulate their behavior by what a church says is right. Not only does a Government "derive its just powers from the consent of the governed," but a church derives its authority from the acquiescence of man. When that authority is exercised arbitrarily it is to be resisted. The powers of all organizations of whatsoever character are conferred by man. There is no other source of authority. The pretended derivation of power from God is imposition. Such a claim cannot be defended before intelligence, and dare not be made except where fear and cowardice make the mind a slave.

The Protestants of the United States, in their attempt to have enacted a National Sabbath law, aim to usurp the rights of others. They propose to

play the role of tyrants, to teach their religion at the point of the bayonet. I think I do not mistake the temper of the American people when I say that they will not submit to this tyranny. We must have fair fighting to-day. The spirit of the age sides with the wronged. There is but one way that people can be made to observe Sunday as the Lord's Day, and that is by convincing them that this day belongs to him, and not to the people. The Protestant churches know that they cannot defend their dogma of the Sabbath, know that there is no reason, no sense in their ideas of Sunday. They are not honest enough to acknowledge the truth. They dare not come out, and let this question be decided by the facts. They know that there is no warrant in Nature, for their foolish notion of Sunday. The truth is against them, and so they ask the Government to come to the assistance of the Lord.

It will take more than the Congress of the United States to settle this question—more than the passage of a bill to secure the observance of Sunday as a day of religious worship, to convince the intelligence of the nineteenth century that one day is better than another or to be used for a different purpose, except as mankind find it convenient or desirable. We are in danger of meriting the criticism of the Hindoo who remarked that "Christians want six days set apart for cheating man, and one day for cheating God."

I know of no question that engenders more of hypocrisy than the Sunday question. There is in

the action of the Protestants in this country more than a menace to our liberties on one day of the week. Let this Sabbath bill before Congress become a law and other tyrannous measures will follow at its heels. If there is any expectation that a more rigid religious observance of Sunday will result in a purer moral atmosphere such expectation is doomed to disappointment. Tyranny has never yet borne a virtue.

For our Government to endorse any Christian dogma is to exceed its powers. There would be no religious meaning in such an act. It would simply be a concession to bigotry which would result in arousing the people to the real nature of Protestantism and to their duty towards this pious tyranny. People will not be converted to Christianity by an act of Congress. The fond faith that a pious text on our national coin would teach the people to reverence the divine name did not materialize into the expected piety. A true life has never yet come from a false education. Instead of Christians wishing to have placed upon our money the inscription, "In God we trust," it would have been more consistent for them to put upon their God:—*In money we trust.*

It will do no good to pass a law which is not demanded by the welfare of the people. An unjust statute has been the mother only of wrongs. Our Government has nothing to do with the religion of its people—no right to interfere in religious matters, only to see that one party or sect does not oppress another.

Congress would stultify the Government were it to pass the National Sabbath bill. Were this bill to become a law it would be unconstitutional. I do not believe that sixty millions of people should be enslaved to please fifteen million bigots.

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